# महाभारत

# The Mahābhārata of Vyasa

BOOK 5

THE COMPLETE UDYOGA PARVA

Transcreated from Sanskrit
by P. Lal

# THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Udyoga Parva
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

*Śvetāśvatara*
*Upaniṣad* IV : 6

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# The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated by P. Lāl from the Sanskrit

BOOK FIVE

The Complete Udyoga Parva

## The Transcreator

P. Lāl is honorary Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and has lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in June 1966, and Visiting Professor in the University of Illinois for the spring semester of 1968. Transcreated the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Mahānārānayaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, spring 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, April-May 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, January-May 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, September 1973-June 1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, September-October 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, February-May 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Currently at work on the complete English version of the Mahābhārata. Born 1928, married Shyamasree Devi 1955; has a son Ananda, and a daughter Srimati. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Delegate to Asian Poets' Conference, Bangkok, 1988; Cambridge Literary Seminar, 1989; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in June 2005. St. Xavier's Lifetime Professor of Excellence award, 2005. Conferred Doctorate of Literature by University of Calcutta in 2006 for "literary scholarship, specially the seminal English transcreation of the Mahābhārata." Seventy five cassettes (each of 90 minutes' duration) of P. Lāl reading his transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata are available from WRITERS WORKSHOP. In October 1999 P. Lāl began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of the transcreated epic to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning for an hour at the Library of Dharma and Culture in Calcutta to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece, the long-term reading project to proceed till the hundred thousand and plus ślokas are exhausted. 300 hour-long CDs of this recording, taped live are available from WW.

# Preface

Since the mores of print-culture civilisation press on us so incessantly and insistently, one needs to keep repeating that the full riches of the mahā-kāvya of Vyāsa will be experienced only if we treat it as an aural and oral epic. It is meant to be recited, and has to be heard. Instructive to keep in mind that the scholarly Poona Bhandarkar edition of Vyāsa's epic has decided that the popular belief that Vyāsa dictated the entire *Mahābhārata* to a delighted and puzzled Gaṇeśa, who wrote it down using the tip of hit snapped tusk as a pen, is an interpolation:

And what better parva than the Udyoga to provide the excellence of the oral experience? Even in our computer-sarvy, hard copy, Book-of-the-Month Club, ad-flooded, 124-page daily newspaper era, the spoken word reigns supreme, faithful in its own fashion to the emotional and esthetic needs of the human psyche. School and college classrooms. board meetings, political rallies, and confabulations of the Security Council and addresses at the General Assembly of the United Nations – the spokes word makes its vibrations felt.

In a sense, the Udyoga parva is a Vyāsan U. N. of sorts. War looms on the Hastināpura horizon. The Pāṇḍavas, with Krishna always supporting, demand their "rightful" inheritance. Duryodhana is adamant: since the Pāṇḍavas are not the sons of Pāṇḍu, they are not entitled to even two finger-widths of the kingdom, lat alone five villages – their pathetic last demand. He will not allow a legal precedent of inheritance rights to be set.

Armies are readied by the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. The cold war hots up. Before the pressure explodes, frantic last-minute efforts at peace-making are initiated. *Purohita*, Vidura, Sañjaya, Ulūka and other eminences go as envoys. So does Krishna. They are all smooth talkers. They all have proxy points of view; they are all His Master's Voices.

But what voices! What subtle diplomatic manoeuvrings! What, shall we say, "duplomacy"! Sincerity and duplicity make a curious heady mix. The spoken word – which is everywhere in the *Mahābhārata* – is nowhere more charming and cunning, more

straight and double-edged, more selfish and altruistic than here. A wonderful exercise in public relations and double-speak. The amazing truth is that each speaker is actually only a mouthpiece. What he believes is inmaterial – he is pushing a case as well as he can, and he is using the resources of language to convince an adversary of his client's good faith and the adversary's vulnerability. When two sovereign powers, backed by military might, indulge in such posturing, can anything other than a Kurukṣetra Armageddon be the outcome?

The disturbing truth is that both the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas have already made up their minds that war is inevitable. How Mahākāla must be chuckling at this suicidal drama of the protagonists of the doomed Dvāpara Yuga! Peace in our time – even as the armies goose-step into Czechoslovakia! "Udyoga" means effort, enterprise, struggle – here, war preparation.

It is here that Vyāsa presents his "other" side. The cold, calculating, kingdom-concerned pseudo-sweet debate on the one hand. On the other, the sentimental, deeply human, unbelievably poignant Karṇa-Kuntī face-to-face. Krishna tries "bribing" Karṇa with family pride, kingdom, and even adds Draupadī as a bonus bait should Karṇa agree to switch sides.

To her love-child Kuntī offers a mother's shame and a long-suppressed love. Karṇa refuses. He places *sakhā*-duty above filial love. And Vyāsa (on pp. 612-616) provides his listener with a masterpiece of compressed dialogue and, as always with him, no clear answer. Who is morally right: Karṇa or Kuntī? Who is the "real" mother: foster Rādhā or biological Kuntī?

From Rabindranath Tagore ("Karṇa-Kuntī Sambād") in the east to Shivaji Sawant ("Mrityunjaya") in the west, poets and novelists in India have marvelled and worried over this relationship of mother and son. It haunts the Indian imagination, forcing listeners (and readers) to take sides. And Vyāsa? Others abide our question. Thou art free. We ask and ask. Thou smilest, and art still, out-topping knowledge. All he concludes about Karṇa and Kuntī is: "They parted, going different ways."

Kolkata
April 2006

# Dedication

To
Mahākāla
for making possible a blend
of fortuitous circumstances
from 1958 onwards
enabling the creation
of WRITERS WORKSHOP
to make available to Indian readers
and others outside Bharat
the works of young and unknown Indians
writing creatively in English
thereby giving flesh-and-bone
to an *udyoga*
many considered to be a pipe-dream.

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva Narottamaṁ |
Devīṁ Sarasvatīṁ Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ||

INVOCATION

We namaskāra Nārāyaṇa!
We namaskāra Nara!
We namaskāra finest-of-men Narottama!
We namaskāra Devī Sarasvatī!
We namaskāra Vyāsa!
May victory attend us. We exclaim Jaya!

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥

SECTION ONE

1 The brave Kaurava heroes
attending the wedding
rites of Abhimanyu,
rested for the night,
and early next morning
went to Virāṭa.

2 The sabhā of Virāṭa
was lavish with gems
and luxurious seats,
and redolent with fragrance,
The excellent heroes
were welcomed inside.

3 Sitting in front
were Virāṭa and Drupada,
Indras-among-men.
Sitting beside them,
with their father Vasudeva,
Janārdana-Krishna and Balarāma.

4 Near the Pāñcāla rājā
sat the ruler of Śini,
with Rohiṇī's son Balarāma;
sitting beside
the ruler of Matsya,
Janārdana-Krishna and Yudhiṣṭhira.

5 Rājā Drupada's sons,
Bhīma and Arjuna,
the twin sons of Mādrī,
Pradyumna and Sāmba,
Abhimanyu beside
the son of Virāṭa;

6 And sitting on the finest
gold-designed seats
were Draupadī's sons –
equalling their fathers
in good looks and strength
and incomparable valour.

7 The mahā-chariot-heroes,
in richly ornamented
glittering dresses,
shone with the glory
of a galaxy of stars
in the vast sky.

8 The excellent heroes
conversed casually
on various subjects,
and then, suddenly,
all fell silent,
and looked at Krishna.

9 The lion-like rājās
finished talking,
and turned their attention
to Krishna discoursing
with the deepest seriousness
about the Pāṇḍavas.

10 "You are all aware
how Subala's son Śakunī
tricked Yudhiṣṭhira,
usurped his kingdom,
and made the arrangement
of forest-exile.

11 For thirteen years
the sons of Pāṇḍu
have kept their word,
though they could have conquered
earth and heaven
with their glorious chariots.

12 They suffered grievously
in their thirteenth year,
but, unknown to anyone,
silently and secretly
accepting their hardships,
the mahātmās have survived.

13 After being servants,
they now want back
their family and kingdom.
Decide what is best
for Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
and rājā Duryodhana.

14 Decide on the dharma
most likely to increase
bull-brave Kaurava glory.
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
will not use adharma
even to gain heaven.

15 He would prefer
a village obtained
by dharma-and-artha.
All of you know
how Dhṛtarāṣṭra
took the Pāṇḍava inheritance.

16 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
by guile and deceit
dispossessed the Pāṇḍavas.
Not once were they able
to rout the Pāṇḍavas
on the field of battle.

17 Yet rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and his friends continue
to wish them well.
The lands and wealth
once gained by humbling
arrogant rulers –

18 Is all that the sons
of Kuntī and Mādrī
want to have back.
You know how the Pāṇḍavas
when boys became targets
for their foes who conspired

19 To kill them with all
the means available.
Deception and cruelty
were freely employed.
Contrast their greed
with the dharma of Yudhiṣṭhira.

20 Take into account
their blood-relationship.
Consult. Think freely.
The Pāṇḍavas always
have spoken the truth
and honoured their pledge.

21 If Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
persist in wrong-doing,
the Pāṇḍavas will kill them
or make arrangements
with allies to stop
all further depredations.

22 Should they be adamant,
the Pāṇḍavas will kill them
on the battlefield.
You might be thinking
how a handful of Pāṇḍavas
can wipe out so many.

23 They have strong supporters
ready to help them
overcome their enemies.
But all is uncertain –
who knows what Duryodhana's
next move will be?

24 How can one act
without knowing the mind
of the opposite camp?
Let us arrange
to send a man of dharma,
prudence and nobility,

25 As emissary, requesting
that half of the kingdom
be returned to Yudhiṣṭhira."
These words of Krishna,
full of dharma-and-artha,
impressed the assembly.

26 Balarāma, the elder
brother of Krishna,
addressed the gathering:

## SECTION TWO

1 "There is dharma-and-artha
in the words of the elder
brother of Gada:
they seek the welfare
of foe-less Yudhiṣṭhira
and rājā Duryodhana.

2 The brave sons of Kuntī
are willing to part
with half of their kingdom,
Let the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
likewise give up half.
Let us all be happy.

3 The Pāṇḍava heroes,
receiving their half,
will live peacefully.
With both sides reconciled,
their subjects will prosper
with rapid increase.

4 I will rejoice
if peace could unite
the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas,
someone clarifies
the views of Yudhiṣṭhira
in front of Duryodhana.

5 Let this man honour mahā-experienced
Vicītravīrya's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and valiant Bhisma,
Droṇa and his son,
Vidura, Kṛpa, Gāndhāra-
rājā Śakuni and Karṇa,

6 As well as the numerous
sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
who are known to be powerful,
who have reverence for dharma,
who honour the Vedas
and the spirit of the times.

7 Let this messenger place
before them, and the elders,
and all the citizens,
sensible proposals
calculated to benefit
the interests of Yudhiṣṭhira.

8 Though they conspired
to appropriate by force
the kingdom of Yudhiṣṭhira,
by taking advantage
of his weakness for gambling,
no need to provoke them.

9 Brave Yudhiṣṭhira here,
unskilled in gambling,
ignored the advice
of his friends and faced
skilful Śakuni
in a game of dice.

10 There were thousands of others
present whom Yudhiṣṭhira
could easily have defeated.
Ignoring them all,
he preferred to leave
Suyodhana-Duryodhana and Karṇa,

11 And settled instead
on Subala's son –
and lost all he had.
Once the game started,
he went on losing.
Let none blame Śakuni.

12 So let our messenger
respectfully address
Vicitravīrya's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
This is the way
to make Duryodhana accept
the terms of our plan.

13 His words should be gentle
when addressing Duryodhana,
his tone unbelligerent.

14 The victories of peace
are real, the victories
of war disastrous."

15 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Mādhava-Balarāma
was suddenly interrupted
by brave Sātyaki,
descendant of Śini,
who suggested the following:

[V:3:1-8]

Transcreated by P. Lal

SECTION THREE

1 “The words of a man
are expressions of his ātman.
Your words here today
are expressions of your innermost ātman.

2 There are brave men
and there are not-so-brave men.
Human beings fall easily
into these two categories.

3 The same family has strong men,
as well as weaklings.
The same tree has boughs with fruit
and boughs without.

4 I am not criticising you,
O plough-pennanted hero;
Mādhava-Balarāma, I am criticising those
who listen to you.

5 How they can even allow
the slightest criticism
of dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
I do not understand.

6 That mahātmā never wanted to gamble;
he was tricked into playing
and defeated.
Is that a dharma-victory?

7 Had he been gambling with his brothers
privately at home,
and Śakuni had defeated him there,
that indeed would be a dharma-victory.
Instead, they seduced a Kṣatriya
from his dharma.

8 They defeated him with cheap trickery.
How can such men hope to prosper?
Why should Yudhiṣṭhira
approach them humbly?

9 His exile is over; he is fully entitled
to his ancestral kingdom.
Even if he sought his kingdom
unlawfully,

10 Why should he beg?
Why demean himself in this way?
They say they saw through his disguise
before the end of his exile.

11 How can the Kauravas be said
to follow dharma?
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Vidura pleaded
with the Kauravas

12 To return the rightful wealth
of the Pāṇḍavas.
Yet they refused.
I plan to use sharp deadly arrows

13 To persuade them, and make them fall
at wise Yudhiṣṭhira's feet.
If they refuse to fall
at mahātmā Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira's feet,

14 I will despatch them and their followers
to the realm of Yama.
How can they survive
Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki's military onslaughts?

15 Can mountains survive the impact
of thunderbolts?
Who dares oppose the Gāṇḍīva-wielder Arjuna
and the *cakra*-hurler Krishna?

16 Who dares face me in my anger?
or fierce Bhīma?
or the bow-expert twin brothers
who have the radiance
of Yama and Kāla?
Or equally brave Virāṭa and Drupada?

17 Which man who cherishes his life
will dare challenge Dhṛṣṭadyumna
or the Draupadī-honouring
five Pāṇḍava brothers?

18 Where are the equals of the Pāṇḍavas
in courage and in other ways?
Who fights the god-conquering son of Subhadrā –
Abhimanyu?

19 Or Gada, Pradyumna, Sāmba –
all radiant like Kāla, Sūrya, or Fire?
After killing Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
and Śakuni

20 And Karṇa on the battlefield,
we will instal Yudhiṣṭhira king.
It is not adharma
to kill an implacable enemy.

21 But it is adharma to fawn and plead
before enemies.
Let us quickly do
what Yudhiṣṭhira really desires.

22 Let us get the kingdom back
in the Pāṇḍavas' hands.
Yudhiṣṭhira must be given back
his kingdom.

23 The other alternative is to slaughter
All his enemies on the battlefield."

## SECTION FOUR

1 "Mahā-muscled one," said Drupada,
"it will happen as you say.
Duryodhana will not return the kingdom
amicably.

2 Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who dotes on his son,
will support him.
Bhīṣma and Droṇa will do likewise,
as will Rādheya-Karṇa and foolish Śakuni.

3 I do not find merit in the plan
of Baladeva-Balarāma.
My words should appeal to all
who have commonsense.

4 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son does not deserve
to be appeased.
Impossible to convince wicked Duryodhana
by peaceful overtures.

5 To talk peace with Duryodhana
is like being gentle with a donkey
and strict with a cow.
He is evil minded.

6 Scoundrelly Duryodhana will interpret gentleness
as weakness.
Gentle means will convince him
he has won in advance.

7 We must start making preparations
without delay.
We must ask our friends to send
their armies to us.

8 Let us rush messengers to Śalya,
Dhṛṣṭaketu and Jayatsena,
and also to the ruler
of the Kekayas.

9 Duryodhana must be planning too.
Good men offer help to those
who come first
to seek and ask for help.

10 Let us be the first to ask for help.
Let us hurry
with our messengers.
A massive event is brewing.

11 Inform Śalya and his dependent rulers;
send word
to rājā Bhagadatta
and the people of the eastern shores.

12 O radiant one! Invite Hārdika-Kṛtavarman, Amitaujas,
Ugra and Andhaka,
the proud and brave Dīrghaprajña,
and Rocamāna.

13 Invite Bṛhanta and king Senabindu,
Senajit, Prativindhya, Citravarman, Suvāstuka,

14 Bāhlika, Muñjakesa, the king of the Cedis,
Supārśava, Śubāhu, the mahā-chariot-hero Paurava,

15 The rulers of the Śakas, Pahlavas, Daradas,
Surari, Nadija, and king Karṇaveṣṭa,

16 Nīla, Vīradharma, the heroic Bhūmipāla,
Impossible-to-defeat Dantavaktra, Rukmin,
Janamejaya,

17 Āṣāḍha, Vāyuvega, the king of Pūravapālī,
Bhūrtejas, Devaka, Ekalavya and his sons,

18 The rājās of Kāruṣa, mighty Kṣemadhuri,
The rulers of Kāmboja, the Ṛṣikas, the western
sea-coast kings,

19 Jayatsena, Kāśya, the rulers of the five rivers,
The invincible son of Kratha, the hill chiefs,

20 The sons of Janaka, Suśarmā, Manimān,
Yotimatsaka,
The ruler of Paṁśu kingdom, brave Dhṛṣṭaketu,

21 Tuṇḍa, Daṇḍadhāra, heroic Bṛhatsena,
Aparājita, Niṣāda, Sreṇimān, Vasumān,

22 Bṛhadbala, Mahaujā, Bāhu, Parapurañjaya,
Rājā Samudrasena and his valiant son,

23 Udbhava, Kṣemaka, king Vīṭādhāna,
Śṛutayu, Dṛḍhayu, the brave son of Śālva,

24 Kumāra, and the indomitable king of Kaliṅga.
I think it fit they should be invited.

25 O rājā! My *purohita*
is a very erudite Brahmin:
send him to Dhṛtarāṣṭra
with the appropriate messages.

26 Instruct him how he should present himself
before Duryodhana,
Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra and finest-of-chariot-heroes Droṇa."

## SECTION FIVE

1 Vāsudeva-Krishna said, "The matchless-in-prowess
king Drupada of the Somakas
has spoken words aimed at the welfare
of Pāṇḍava rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

2 We are determined to do right.
We should follow this
as a first duty.
Foolish to behave differently.

3 We are related equally
to the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas,
though they may be caught up
in family conflict.

4 We – and you – were invited here
for the wedding.
After the ritual is over,
we will return home happy.

5 Of these rājās here, you are the eldest
in age and wisdom.
We should consider ourselves
your pupils.

6 Dhṛtarāṣṭra has the highest regard
for you;
you are a close friend
of ācāryas Droṇa and Kṛpa.

7 Devise a message that will suit
the Pāṇḍavas' interests.
None of us will oppose whatever
you decide on.

[V:5:8-16]

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8 If bull-brave Kaurava Duryodhana
accepts a treaty on equal terms,
the filial relations of Kaurava and Pāṇḍava
will prosper.

9 If Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,
motivated by pride and folly,
spurns the peace terms,
send word to all of us.

10 Wicked Duryodhana
will have to face –
together with his followers –
the angered Gāṇḍīva-wielder's wrath."

11 Lord-of-the-earth Virāṭa,
honoured Vārṣṇeya-Krishna
and bid him and his followers farewell
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

12 After Krishna departed for Dvārakā,
Yudhiṣṭhira's followers and king Virāṭa
made preparations
for a great war.

13 Virāṭa and his allies,
along with king Drupada,
informed other rulers
of the impending battle.

14 Requested by the Kuru-lions,
and the rulers of Matsya and Pāñcāla,
many kings gladly came
with huge armies.

15 When Dhṛtarāṣṭra heard
that a colossal force
was gathering under the Pāṇḍavas,
he summoned friendly rulers.

16 It seemed that the whole world
was crowded
with the armies of kings
helping the Kauravas or the Pāṇḍavas.

17 The fourfold army-divisions filled
the entire earth.
Soldiers began flocking
from all the major directions.

18 The hilled-and-forested earth-devī trembled.
The king of the Pāñcālas,
in accordance
with Yudhiṣṭhira's wishes,
sent his old-in-age-and-learning *purohita*
to the Kauravas.

SECTION SIX

1 Drupada said, "Animate life
is superior to inanimate;
intelligent animate life is superior
to unintelligent;
human intelligent animate life
superior to non-human;
and the twice-born human
superior to other humans.

2 The Veda-knowers are superior
to the twice-born;
the self-perfected are superior
to the Veda-knowers;
the life-involved are superior
to the self-perfected;
the Brahman-knowers are superior
to the life-involved.

3 You are the finest of those
who are self-perfected.
You are nobly-born,
ripe in age and in wisdom.

4 Your insight equals that of Śukra
or Aṅgirasa-Bṛhaspati,
You know exactly what kind of man
Kaurava-Duryodhana is.

5 You also know that kind of man
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira is.
The Pāṇḍavas were tricked
with Dhṛtarāṣṭra's knowledge.

6 Dhṛtarāṣṭra-rejects Vidura's advice,
and follows his son's.
Śakuni conspired to lure Yudhiṣṭhira
into a dice-game.

7 Skilled themselves, they took advantage
of dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
who abided by Kṣatriya-principles
though inept at gambling.

8 They have dogmatically refused
to return the kingdom.
When you speak about dharma
before Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

9 Try to influence the minds
of his soldiers.
Vidura also will use your words
to create rifts

10 In the minds of Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
and others.
With the leaders disunited
and the soldiers suspicious,

11 They will try their utmost to forge
a new unity among themselves.
The Pāṇḍavas meanwhile
will prepare for war,

12 And will start collecting arms
and other provisions.
With the enemy confused,
and you sowing further doubts,

13 The Kauravas will be unable
to prepare as they should.
This must be the chief objective
of your mission.

14 You are a man of dharma;
present dharma before Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Try to make him act
on the basis of dharma.

15 By describing before sympathetic listeners
all the sufferings of the Pāṇḍavas,
and narrating deeds
of family dharma

16 To the elderly, you are sure
to sow disaffection in their minds.
As a Veda-learned Brahmin,
you need not fear.

17 You are an emissary,
you are old and respected.
Start out immediately to further
the interests of the son of Kuntī.
The Jaya and Puṣya stars
are favourable."

18 These were the instructions
given by mahātmā Drupada
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
to the *purohita* leaving for Hastināpura.

19 That learned man,
expert in the art of diplomacy,
went with his disciples
to further the Pāṇḍavas' cause.

## SECTION SEVEN

1 After the *purohita* had left for Hastināpura
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the Pāṇḍavas despatched messengers
to various rulers.

2 They left for different places,
but bull-among-men Arjuna,
the Kaurava son of Kuntī,
personally went to Dvārakā.

[V:6:3-11]

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3 After the departure of the Mādhava heroes
Krishna and Baladeva-Balarāma,
with hundreds of Vṛṣṇis, Andhakas and Bhojas,
for Dvāravatī-Dvārakā,

4 The son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, rājā Duryodhanas,
learnt from his spies
about the preparations
the Pāṇḍavas were busy with.

5 Informed that Mādhava-Krishna was going
to Dvārakā,
Duryodhana followed on wind-swift horses,
with a small retinue.

6 The same day Kuntī's son
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna arrived
in the enchanting capital
of the Ānartas.

7 The two descendants of Kuru,
both tigers-among-men,
arrived simultaneously, and hurried
to where Krishna lay sleeping.

8 Suyodhana-Duryodhana entered
and sat down on the floor
near the head of the bed,
where Govinda-Krishna was resting.

9 Mahā-minded, diadem-wearing Arjuna
entered, palms joined in *añjali*,
and sat on the bed
near Krishna's feet.

10 Vārṣṇeya-Krishna woke,
and saw first the diadem-wearer.
He welcomed them both, offering them
the customary pūjā-respect.

11 Madhusūdana-Krishna enquired the reason
for their visit.
Duryodhana smiled and said lightly
to Krishna:

12 “Arjuna and I are equally
your friends,
but I expect you to help me
when the war starts.

13 After all, O slayer of Madhu,
I did enter first.
And you have the same relationship
to both of us, O Mādhava-Krishna.

14 Indeed, our noble ancestors always
helped the first to come;
and you, Janārdana-Krishna,
are the noblest.
You should continue the practice
of our ancestors.”

15 “I do not doubt,” replied Krishna,
“that you came first, O rājā.
But my glance fell first on Pṛthā-Kuntī’s son
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

16 You, Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
were first to enter,
he first to be seen.
It seems that I shall have to help you both.

17 The *śruti*-texts advise that the young
should get priority.
I should therefore first help Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
the son of Pṛthā-Kuntī.

18 A large army of ten crores of cowherds
called the Nārāyaṇas
is equipped and ready,
each soldier able to kill even me.

19 Let all of them go to one of you –
and, I, weaponless and not fighting,
will take the side
of the other.

20 Pārtha-Arjuna, here is your choice –
me or them.
Dharma lays down
that you have the first choice.”

21 Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
chose Keśava-Krishna, who promised
not to wield arms in the battle –

22 Krishna, who was Nārāyaṇa,
the foe-annihilator,
who chose human birth,
who excelled Kṣatriyas, gods and Dānavas.

23 Duryodhana choose the huge army.
O Bharata Janamejaya!
The thought of those thousands of thousands
of soldiers,

24 Even though he did not receive
the personal help of Krishna,
delighted him.
Having accepted that massive army,

25 Duryodhana went to Rohiṇī's son,
fearfully-strong Balarāma,
and explained the reason for his visit.
The son of Rohiṇī
replied to the son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

26 "Tiger-among-men!
Let me now tell you
what I told all who had come
to the Virāṭa wedding ceremony.

27 I opposed Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna
and spoke on your behalf, O Kaurava.
I reminded them that our relations
with both were equal.

28 But Keśava-Krishna was unwilling
to accept my argument.
And I cannot even for an instant
be separated from Krishna.

29 I will help neither Pārtha-Arjuna
nor Duryodhana.
This is my firm decision,
formed out of regard for Krishna.

30 O bull-brave hero! You are a Bharata,
a dynasty respected by kings.
Go, and fight according to the dharma
of the Kṣatriyas."

31 Duryodhana embraced the plough-wielder
Halāyudha-Balarāma; he was sure,
in spite of Krishna's supporting Arjuna,
that victory would be his.

32 King Duryodhana, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,
approached Kṛtavarman,
who assisted him
with an *akṣauhiṇī*-strong army.

33 Protected by his fear-instilling
band of soldiers,
Kaurava-Duryodhana left, delighted,
inspiring his allies.

34 After Duryodhana's departure,
saffron-robed Janārdana-Krishna,
creator of the world,
said to diadem-wearing Arjuna:
"You knew I would not fight;
why did you choose me?"

35 Arjuna replied, "O bull-brave hero!
You can singly destroy them all,
Besides, even I can destroy them all
singly.

36 You radiate glory.
Glory goes wherever you go.
I too seek glory.
And so I have chosen you.

37 I would like you to be always
my charioteer.
Satisfy this desire
that I have long cherished."

38 "It is good, Pārtha-Arjuna," said Krishna,
"that you measure yourself
against me.
I will gladly be your charioteer."

39 Delighted, Pārtha-Arjuna, with Krishna
and other chiefs of the Dāśārhas,
returned to Yudhiṣṭhira
(said Vaiśampāyana).

SECTION EIGHT

1 O rājā Janamejaya!
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
Śalya heard of the war preparations,
and set out with his friends
with a vast army
to help the Pāṇḍavas.

2 His soldiers camped
on half a *yojana* of land.
That bull-among-men commanded
a vast army.

3 He was a king of mahā-valour and prowess.
His *akṣauhiṇī*-strong army
displayed varied armours,
varied ornaments;

4 It rode varied chariots
and had varied animals,
varied dresses and divine garlands,
the uniforms

5 And ornaments of varied lands.
Hundreds of thousands of heroes!
Bull-brave Kṣatriyas
formed his leaders.

6 He arrived by slow march
to the main Pāṇḍava camp,
and rested. His march terrified
the trembling earth.

7 Duryodhana heard that the mahātmā
mahā-chariot-warrior
was on the move, and hastily came
to welcome him.

8 Duryodhana ordered mansions constructed
in ravishing places,
and ornamented with gems,
to please Śalya with pūjā-respect.

9 He sent troupes of entertainers
for Śalya's diversion,
and lavished garlands
and delectable food and drink on him.

10 He had wells constructed
to please the mind –
and fountains and streams
and buildings of all sizes.

11 Offered pūjā-respect by Duryodhana's men
as he arrived
at these splendid mansions,
receiving respect deserved by the gods,

12 Śalya rested in a palace fit for the gods;
he received the homage
that is given
to superhuman beings;

13 And he began to think no end
of his greatness –
even greater than Puraṁdara-Indra!
Pleased, he asked his servants;

14 "Which artisans of Yudhiṣṭhira
built these splendid palaces?
Summon them here. I wish to reward
these mansion-makers.

15 I will reward them suitably,
and so please Yudhiṣṭhira."
They were astonished,
and informed Duryodhana about this.

16 Śalya was so delighted
he could have given away his life.
Precisely then, Duryodhana approached
his maternal uncle.

17 The rājā of Madra saw him and surmised
that he was the pleasure-provider.
He embraced Duryodhana:
"What would you like?"

18 Duryodhana replied: "Your word is enough.
I want a boon.
It is right that you should command
my entire army.

19 I am no less to you
than what the Pāṇḍavas are.
O radiant one! I wish to be your *bhakta.*
Give me your friendship."

20 "Mahārāja," said Śalya,
"your words have the ring of truth.
I gladly accept the command
of your entire army."

21 Śalya added, "This much is done.
What more do you wish?"
Gāndhārī's son Duryodhana merely repeated,
"Enough. Enough."

22 "Duryodhana, bull-among-men,
return to your capital,"
said Śalya, "while I go to meet
foe-subduing Yudhiṣṭhira.

23 O rājā! I will come to you
alter meeting Yudhiṣṭhira.
I am committed to meet
the excellent bull-brave Pāṇḍavas."

24 "Lord of the earth," said Duryodhana,
"return quickly, O rājā.
I need you. O Indra-among-kings,
remember your promise."

25 Śalya replied. "May you prosper!
Be in your capital.
I will return soon." Śalya and Duryodhana
embraced warmly.

26 After honouring Śalya,
Duryodhana returned to his capital
and Śalya went to inform the Pāṇḍavas
of Duryodhana's friendship.

27 He arrived in Upaplavya
and entered the Pāṇḍava camp,
where he saw all the Pāṇḍava brothers
in conference.

28 Mahā-muscled Śalya accepted
the customary offerings
of feet-washing and *arghya,*
as well as a cow-gift.

29 The foe-crushing rājā of Madra
enquired about their welfare
and embraced Yudhiṣṭhira
with great warmth.

30 Next he embraced Bhīma and Arjuna;
then his sister Mādrī's twin sons.
Draupadī, Sabhadrā and Abhimanuyu
came

31 And honoured Śalya.
Pāṇḍu's son, dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
offered *añjali* with folded palms
and said respectfully:

32 "O rājā! You are welcome.
Please be seated comfortably."
King Śalya sat on a golden throne.
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira enquired
about the health of Śalya,
benefactor of all.

33 The dharma-principled son of Pāṇḍu
turned and faced Śalya,
who looked at Yudhiṣṭhira
and said:

34 "O tiger-brave rājā! Delighter of the Kaurava dynasty!
Victorious ruler!
Is all well with you?
Your term of exile is over.

35 You, your brothers, and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
have surmounted
incredible obstacles in the course
of your forest-exile.

36 To live without being traced
was another great test.
What sorrow can be greater
than the loss of a kingdom?

37 O foe-destroying rājā! After surviving this misery
created by Duryodhana,
you will enjoy happiness
by destroying all your enemies.

38 Maharāja, dear friend, you are familiar
with human psychology,
You have never, O lord of men,
indulged in selfishness.

39 O Bharata descendant, follow the path
of the ancient rāja-ṛṣis;
You are like them in generosity, truth and tāpasyā,
dear friend, *tāta*.

40 Forebearance, self-control, truth and ahiṁsā –
all these marvellous virtues
can be seen in you.
O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,

41 You are gentle, large-hearted, devoted to Brahman,
charitable and firm in dharma.
The world's dharmas
are known to you, O rājā.

42 All matters of the world are known to you,
*tāta*, my dear friend.
O bull-brave Bharata,
it is good your sorrows are over.

43 O rājā! You are a virtue-laden dharmātmā,
you have emerged triumphant in tribulation.
I am fortunate to have seen you,
O Indra-among-rājās!

44 After saying this (continued Vaiśampāyana),
rājā Śalya told them
about his meeting with Duryodhana,
and his promise.

45 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "That you made a promise,
O rājā,
when you were profoundly pleased,
is in itself good.

46 O lord of the earth, may you prosper!
I want one favour from you.
It is not entirely right, O rājā,
yet you must favour me.

47 Listen to me carefully, O valiant king.
As a charioteer,
you are the equal of Vāsudeva-Krishna
on the battlefield.

48 O finest-of-rājās! When Arjuna and Karṇa
clash in chariot-duel,
I insist that you
be the charioteer of Karṇa.

49 If you wish my welfare, you must shield Arjuna,
O rājā,
and neutralise Karṇa's energy
so that victory is ours.

50 I know this is not right,
but you are my maternal uncle,
and you must do it."
Śalya said: "Mahātmā Pāṇḍava, listen.
I wish you well. You wish that I
should disable the charioteer's son.

51 I am agreeable to being
the charioteer of Karṇa –
he looks on me as the equal
of Vāsudeva-Krishna himself.

52 O tiger-brave Kaurava, I also promise
that in the battle
I will give Karṇa advice calculated
to do him harm,

53 By sapping his pride
and undermining his prowess. Then,
son of Pāṇḍu, he can be happily killed.
I give you my word.

54 *Tātā,* my friend, I will do whatever
you have asked,
and I will do more also
to please you and help you.

55 The shame of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
after the game of dice,
the cruel words of the charioteer's son
that you had to endure,

56 The terrors of the anti-god Jaṭa
and of Kīcaka –
all these Damayantī-like humiliations
of Draupadī –

57 All these sorrows, brave one,
will end in happiness.
Not you, but fate that guides events,
will achieve this.

58 O lord of the earth! Yudhiṣṭhira!
Even mahātmās have to face great sorrows.
Even the gods have to contend
with their share of sorrows.

59 O Bharata rājā, we are told
that even mahātmā Indra,
the rājā of the gods, faced great sorrows
with his queen."

## SECTION NINE

1 "O Indra-among-rājās! Explain to me,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira, "how mahātmā Indra
and his queen faced and conquered
their terrible sorrows."

2 O rājā! This is an old story (said Śalya),
handed down
from the very ancient past,
of Indra and his wife's troubles.

3 The lord-of-creatures, Prajāpati Tvaṣṭā
was a supreme god
of mahā-tapasyā whose hatred of Indra
produced a three-headed son.

4 His name was Viśvarūpa,
the mahā-radiant World-Formed;
his faces were Sun, Moon, and Fire;
he desired to usurp Indra's place.

5 One mouth chanted the Vedas,
one drank wine,
and the third seemed intent
on devouring the directions.

6 He practised tapasyā, he was gentle,
he had self-control and dharma.
None had the courage
to equal his mahā-tapasyā.

7 Seeing his power of tapasyā
and incredible firmness in truth,
Indra became dispirited,
fearing he would be supplanted.

8 How to frustrate his mahā-tapasyā
by letting him plunge
in sense-pleasures – for the three-header
could devour the worlds –

9 This thought engaged the attention of Indra.
Therefore, O bull-brave Bharata,
to seduce Tvaṣṭā's son
Indra instructed the apsarās:

10 "Go quickly, distract the three-header
into carnal kāma.
Use whatever means you have
to tempt him to sensuality.

[V:9:11-18]

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11 Adorn your heaving hips,
wear the most glittering necklaces,
flaunt pearls, and enhance
your ravishing beauty.

12 And may you succeed!
May my fears be removed.
Use all the wiles of seduction
to excite his desires.
O lovely-limbed ones, destroy the mahā-fear
that has gripped my heart."

13 "We will try our utmost, Indra,"
said the apsarās.
"to distract him so that your fear
may be allayed.

14 We will go to him where he sits
absorbed in tapasyā-meditation,
his intense gaze scorching the worlds;
we will lure him
and make him our slave;
we will remove your fear."

15 Ordered by Indra, the apsarās approached
the three-header.
The ravishing girls tempted him
with various seductive gestures.

16 They exposed their voluptuous bodies
before his eyes
but he remained firm in mahā-tapasyā,
he was not stirred.

17 His senses were fully controlled,
he was ocean-absorbed.
Having tried their best,
the girls returned to Śakra-Indra.

18 They did *añjali* before the rājā of the god
and said,
"Lord, *Prabhu!* He cannot be seduced
from his meditation.

19 O mahā-fortune-favoured one,
do what you think is best."
Mahā-minded Śakra-Indra pūjā-respected the apsarās
and dismissed them.

20 He devised another plan to frustrate
the ascetic's resolve.
O Yudhiṣṭhira! The rājā of the gods was heroic,
silently percipient, determined.

21 He worked out a way of killing
the three-header.
He thought : *I will hurl my thunderbolt*
*and disintegrate him.*

22 *A flourishing enemy, however puny,*
*cannot be ignored.*
Quoting the śāstras to justify himself,
he planned to kill.

23 Anger-propelled Śakra-Indra hurled his terrifying
fear-producing fiery thunderbolt
at the heads
of Viśvarūpa.

24 The thunderbolt hit Viśvarūpa
with a devastating impact;
he reeled and fell,
like a tottering mountain peak.

25 Struck by the bolt
he lay inert like a toppled hill –
but he still shone. And this rankled
in Devendra-Indra's mind.

26 He was dead, but he shone,
he seemed alive!
His three heads emanated
a grisly radiance.

27 Śakra-Indra was disturbed by this.
He stood bewildered.
Just then a woodcutter turned up,
balancing an axe on his shoulder.

28 Mahārāja, the woodcutter came to the spot
where the three-header lay–
Śacī's husband Indra
fearfully saw him;

29 The slayer of Pāka quickly said
to the woodcutter:
"Chop off the heads of this creature.
Do as I say!"

30 The woodcutter replied: "My axe cannot cut off
such a huge-shouldered neck.
I will not do a deed
that good men will condemn."

31 Indra said, "What do you fear?
Do as I say!
My grace will give thunderbolt-sharpness
to your axe."

32 The woodcutter replied,
"But first I must know the truth –
who are you? Why do you want
this gruesome deed done?"

33 "I am Indra," answered Indra,
"rājā of the gods.
Do as I say, woodcutter,
and stop arguing."

34 The woodcutter said,
"Are you not ashamed
to do such a horrible deed?
A ṛṣi-son's murder is Brahmin-murder."

35 "I will perform dharma-rituals later
and purify myself," replied Indra,
"I slew this mahā-valiant enemy
with my thunderbolt.

36 But I feel uneasy,
there is fear inside my heart.
Chop off his heads quickly,
and I will grant you a favour.

37 Men do offer the heads of beasts
in yajña-rituals.
That is all I ask
Do this quickly to please me."

38 The woodcutter obeyed Mahendra-Indra
and chopped off the heads,
one by one, of the three-header
with his axe.

39 From the heads flew
a flutter of birds –
*kapiñjala*-doves, *tittira*-partridges,
and *kalaviṅka*-quail.

40 Out of the mouth that chanted the Vedas
and drank *soma*
flew a flutter
of *kapiñjala*-doves.

41 O Pāṇḍava rājā! Out of the mouth
that appeared to devour
all the directions,
flew a flutter of *tittira*-partridges.

42 O bull-brave Bharata!
Out of the mouth that drank wine
flew a flutter of *kalaviṅka*-quail
and preying vultures.

43 The flocks of birds dispelled
Maghavat-Indra's apprehensions.
He returned to heaven,
and the woodcutter went home.

44 The woodcutter did not say a word
of this to anyone.
A full year passed, and the deed
remained a secret.

45 After a year, the spirit-creatures of Śiva
began declaring
that Indra was guilty
of Brahmin-murder.

46 To expiate, Indra the Pāka-slayer
took a vow
to perform severe tapasyā
with the gods and Maruts.

47 He dissipated his crime
by offering his services
to the ocean, the earth, the forests,
and to women.

48 By this selfless dedication
to the ocean, the earth,
the forests, and women,
he absolved himself of Brahmin-murder.

49 After his purification, Bhagavān Indra received
the pūjā of gods,
humans, and mahā-ṛṣis,
and re-entered heaven.

50 Having killed his enemy,
Śakra-Indra was at last pacified.
When Prajāpati-Tvaṣṭā heard
of his son's murder,

51 He was infuriated; with eyes flaming in wrath,
he declared:
"My son was disciplined and calm,
a man of tapasyā.
He was guilty of nothing,
and yet he was slaughtered.

52 I will create Vṛtra
who will destroy Śakra-Indra.
The worlds will witness the mahā-power
of my tapasyā!

53 The ill-ātmaned, wicked ruler of the gods
will witness it too!"
The inflamed ascetic
performed his ablutions,

54 And offered oblations to Agni.
Fierce Vṛtra was born.
Tvaṣṭā said: "Foe of Indra!
Grow strong through my tapasyā."

55 He grew, like the Vaiśvānara fire or the sun,
till he touched the sky.
He grew like the sun of Kāla.
He said, "Order me."

56 Tvaṣṭā said, "Kill Śakra-Indra!"
Vṛtra shot up towards
the third world; a battle raged
between him and Vāsava-Indra.

57 A fierce battle between two raging enemies!
O excellent Kaurava!
Vṛtra siezed the thousand-ritual-receiving
ruler of the gods.

58 He opened wide his mouth,
and flung Śakra-Indra inside.
The gods were terrified seeing Vṛtra
swallow Indra.

59 The mahā-powerful gods then created
the Cosmic Yawn Jṛṁbhika
which destroyed Vṛtra.
The moment Vṛtra yawned wide,

60 Bala-slayer Indra contracted his limbs
and slipped out of the open mouth.
Thus was created
the human yawn.

61 Seeing Indra emerge, the gods celebrated loudly,
O bull-brave Bharata,
even as he and Vṛtra recommenced
their fierce duel.

62 The gory battle continued
between the two contenders.
Vṛtra, driven by the powerful
propulsion

63 Of Tvaṣṭā's energy,
succeeded in subduing Śakra-Indra.
Indra retreated, to the disappointment
of the gods.

64 They were all overpowered by Tvaṣṭā's energy.
O Bharata descendant!
They held a hurried consultation
with holy men.

65 Fear gripped them, even as they tried
to work out
a suitable strategy.
Sitting on the Mandara-peak, O rājā,
determined to destroy Vṛtra,
they invoked Mahātmā Viṣṇu the Indestructible.

## SECTION TEN

1 Indra said: "This entire universe,
that looks indestructible,
is in Vṛtra's power. Nothing, O gods,
can oppose him.

2 At one time I could, but not any more.
May you prosper!
But I am helpless.
He is invincible.

3 He is a mahātmā, he is energetic,
he is matchless on the battlefield,
he can devour
gods, anti-gods, and men.

4 Dwellers of heaven, it appears
that by going
to the abode of Viṣṇu
and consulting that mahātmā
we may be able to destroy
this ill-ātmaned monster."

5 The gods and ṛṣis,
inspired by the words of Indra,
sought the protection
of mahā-powerful Viṣṇu.

6 Still filled with fear of Vṛtra,
they invoked
the god of gods:
"You who straddled
The three worlds
With three steps!

7 O Viṣṇu!
You who recovered the *amṛta*,
You who killed the Daitya antigods,
You who slew the mahā-antigod Bali;
You who appointed Śakra-Indra chief god!

8 You are the lord of all the gods,
You pervade the universe,
You are the supreme god, Mahādeva,
You are the adored one of the worlds!

9 You are the greatest of the gods,
You are the goal of the gods including Indra,
You are the slayer of antigods!
But the universe is now pervaded by Vṛtra."

10 Viṣṇu said, "I exist for the supreme welfare
of creatures.
Let me explain how the menace
can be removed.

11 Go with ṛṣis and gandharvas
where the world-formed Vṛtra is waiting:
win him over by means
of gentle gestures.

12 My energy will give victory
to Śakra-Indra:
I will invisibly enter
his wondrous thunderbolt-missile.

13 O excellent gods,
go now with the ṛṣis and gandharvas.
Work out a truce
between Śakra-Indra and Vṛtra."

14 The ṛṣis and dwellers of heaven, advised by Viṣṇu
(continued Śalya),
hurriedly went to Vṛtra,
with Śakra-Indra leading them.

15 All the mahā-energetic gods approached
the powerful being
whose radiance seemed to scorch
the cardinal directions.

16 It seemed to Śakra-Indra and the gods
that Vṛtra,
as brilliant as sun or moon,
was devouring the three worlds.

17 The ṛṣis approached Vṛtra
and said these pleasing words:
"You who are impossible to vanquish!
You who straddle the three worlds!

18 You who are most powerful!
You have long warred with Indra.
How will you be able to conquer him?

19 Meanwhile, gods, anti-gods and humans
Suffer intolerably.
O Vṛtra, let there be peace
Between you and Indra.

20 Let this be your happiness –
To dwell in the heaven of Śakra-Indra."
Mahā-powerful Vṛtra heard this,

21 And *praṇāma-ed* all the ṛṣis,
and replied:
"O mahā-fortunate beings,
O gandharvas,

22 I have listened carefully
to what you have said.
Listen now to me, O stainless ones.
How can peace exist
between two equally strong gods,
me and Śakra-Indra?"

23 The ṛṣis replied:
"Brief friendship is possible,
whatever else follows.
Good men seeking friendship
should never be refused;
indeed, should be welcomed.

24 Friendship with good men,
according to the wise,
is like riches in penury.
What wealth is greater
than friendship with the good?
Never refuse the good.

25 Good men respect Indra,
he is the refuge of mahātmās.
He has dharma, he is truthful,
blameless, and discriminating.

26 Let there be peace for ever
between you and Śakra-Indra.
Put trust in him.
Do not ever think otherwise."

27 The mahā-radiantly-energetic being heard
the mahā-ṛṣis and said:
"Illustrious ones, bhagavan, it is required
that I should honour you.

28 If you promise to honour my terms,
O mighty gods,
I promise to do what you bull-brave Brahma--ṛṣis
have asked of me.

29 Nothing dry,
Nothing wet,
Neither stone
Nor wood,
Neither distant weapon
Nor hand weapon,
Not during day
Nor in the night,

30 Can kill me, though Śakra-Indra
and all the gods try,
O great Brahmins! Agree to this,
and enjoy your peace."

31 All the ṛṣis said, "Agreed."
Vṛtra was pleased
to agree to a peace on the terms
put forward by him.

32 Śakra-Indra also was delighted,
and began thinking deeply
of some means
by which he could destroy Vṛtra.

33 The rājā of the gods restlessly looked
for some way out of the terms.
One day he saw
the mahā-antigod Vṛtra

34 Near a beach.
It was an awe instilling *saṁdhyā*-twilight.
Indra recalled the boon granted
by mahātmā Bhagavān Viṣṇu.

35 *Twilight. Awe-instilling. Not night.*
*And not day.*
*And Vṛtra who has stolen my power*
*must be killed.*

36 *If today I cannot contrive*
*to kill the mahā-powerful anti-god,*
*mahā-bodied Vṛtra,*
*I am finished.*

37 Thinking in this way,
Śakra-Indra invoked Viṣṇu.
Suddenly he saw mountain-high foam
cresting the ocean.

38 *Neither wet, nor dry,*
*Nor is this a weapon.*
*Let me use this to destroy Vṛtra,*
*instantly.*

39 He hurled the foam-tipped thunderbolt
at Vṛtra,
Viṣṇu permeated the foam and liquidated
the anti-god.

40 Darkness disappeared from the cardinal directions
as soon as Vṛtra perished.
A soft breeze blew,
earth-creatures rejoiced.

41 The gods, gandharvas, yakṣas, ṛṣis,
rākṣasas and *uraga*-serpents
honoured Mahendra-Indra
with sacred chants.

42 They all *namaskāra-ed* Indra,
and Indra offered them solace.
His enemy's death made-Vāsava-Indra happy
with the gods.

43 Dharma-knowing Indra
offered pūjā-respect
to the lord-of-the-three-worlds Viṣṇu
after mahā-valiant Vṛtra's destruction.

44 But thoughts of his treachery
oppressed Śakra-Indra and made him suffer.
He remembered the murder
of the Brahmin three-header.

45 He stayed at the edge of the three worlds,
bewildered and conscience-stricken,
avoiding
all the other gods.

46 He hid in water, like a snake.
With the chief god Devendra-Indra gone,
expiating his Brahmin-murder,
the earth was desolate.

47 Forests withered into treelessness.
River currents dried up,
lakes evaporated;
all things began to degenerate.

48 And the world's creatures suffered,
for there was no rain.
The mahā-ṛṣis were paralysed
with fear.

49 Chaos took over the world;
there were fearful calamities.
The gods were frightened,
for no one would be their rājā.

50 The celestial ṛṣis were afraid,
because the rājā of the gods was absent.
No one wanted to be
the rājā of the gods.

## SECTION ELEVEN

1 All the chief gods and ṛṣis
(continued Śalya)
said: "Let handsome Śrīmān Nahuṣa
be the rājā of the gods.

2 He is illustrious and energetic,
a man of dharma."
They approached him, saying
"O earth ruler, be our rājā."

3 Nahuṣa wanted their welfare;
So, O rājā, he replied
to the gods and ṛṣis,
and the accompanying *pitṛs*:

4 "I am weak. I have no shakti
to protect you.
A rājā should be powerful,
as Śakra-Indra was powerful."

5 The gods and excellent ṛṣis
said to him:
"You have the tapasyā necessary
to rule our kingdom.

6 We are all trapped in terrible fear
and anxiety.
O Indra-among-rājās,
be out rājā in heaven.

7 The gods, Dānavas, yakṣas, ṛṣis,
rākṣasas, *pitṛs,*
gandharvas, and whoever else
you chance to see –

8 Their strength will flow into you
immediately.
Cherish dharma above all else,
and be ruler of all the worlds.

9 Protect the gods and Brahma-ṛṣis."
That Indra-among-rājās
was appointed by the gods
as the rājā of heaven.

10 Placing dharma as his ideal,
he sought the welfare of the gods.
Using his power
as ruler of heaven,

11 He surrendered to kāma-pleasures
though he was a man of dharma,
sporting in the divine
Nandana-groves,

12 On mount Kāilasa, on Himavant,
on snowy Mandara,
on Sahya, Mahendra, Malaya,
near oceans and lakes,

13 Surrounding himself with apsarās
and daughters of the gods.
The rājā of the gods
indulged in trivial sports,

14 Spending his time listening
to sweet tales of the gods,
and abandoning himself to songs
and instrumental music.

15 Viśvāvasu, Nārada,
gandharvas and apsarās,
and the six seasons personified,
attended on this new Indra of the gods.

16 Soft, soothing, scented breezes
pleasantly lulled him.
Ill-ātmaned Nahuṣa,
giving himself up to pleasures,

17 Happened to look at Śakra-Indra's
beloved queen and devī.
Ill-ātmaned Nahuṣa saw her
and kept wondering:

18 *Why am I not favoured*
*by Indra's queen-devī?*
"I am lord of the gods and the worlds,
I am Indra.

19 I order Śacī to come to my palace
at once."
Hearing his command,
the devī sadly said to Bṛhaspati:

20 "Brahmin, save me from Nahuṣa!
I seek your grace.
You said
I have all the auspicious marks,

21 That I would prosper as the wife
of the rājā-of-the-gods Indra –
his sole wife,
chaste, never widowed.

22 Lord bhagavan, revered one,
you are the finest of Brahmins;
your words have never proved
to be false.

23 O truth-speaker, may your promise to me
be fulfilled."
Bṛhaspati said to the fear-stricken queen
of Śakra-Indra:

24 "Whatever I said, devī,
will be certainly fulfilled.
You will soon see the gods' rājā Indra
arriving here.

25 You have no reason to fear Nahuṣa.
Trust in me.
I will arrange to have Śakra-Indra
meet you soon."

26 When Nahuṣa learnt that Śakraṇī-Śacī
had placed herself
in Bṛhaspati's protection,
he was infuriated.

## SECTION TWELVE

1 The gods and the excellent ṛṣis noticed.
Nahuṣa's displeasure;
they said to the fierce-looking
rājā-of-the-gods Nahuṣa:

2 "O rājā of the gods, discard your anger.
The gods, anti-gods,
gandharvas, Kinnaras, and *uraga*-serpents
are filled with fear.

3 O noble one, discard your anger.
Anger should never touch you.
Śacī-devī is another's wife.
Be calm, O lord of the gods!

4 Give up thoughts of ravishing another's wife.
It is immoral.
The rājā of the gods
should follow dharma."

5 But he was obsessed by kāma
and did not listen.
The ruler of the gods said to them
concerning Indra:

6 “Indra once ravished
illustrious Ahalyā
while her husband was alive,
What prevented you from blaming him?

7 Indra did many brutal deeds
in the past –
deeds of adharma and deceit,
Why did you not stop him?

8 Have the devī brought before me!
This will bring some good
to her,
and also assure your safety.”

9 “We will bring you Indrāṇī,”
the gods replied,
“but cast aside your anger
and cultivate gentleness.”

10 The gods and ṛṣis took their unpleasant news
(continued Śalya)
to the ṛṣi Bṛhaspati
and to the wife of Indra.

11 They said, “O excellent deva-ṛṣi!
We know the queen of Indra
has your protection
and does not fear any harm.

12 But gods, gandharvas and ṛṣis
together implore you, O mahā-radiant one,
to turn over the queen of Indra
to Nahuṣa.

13 The rājā of the gods, mahā-radiant Nahuṣa,
excels Indra.
The silm-waisted lovely-thighed lady
should accept him as husband.”

14 The devī was so humiliated
that she burst into tears,
and said pathetically
to Bṛhaspati:

15 "O best of the celestical ṛṣis!
I do not want Nahuṣa for husband –
I seek your protection.
Save me!"

16 Bṛhaspati said: "Blameless and truth-speaking
lady of dharma,
I gave you my word;
I will not desert you.

17 I am a Brahmin, I have heard of dharma,
I know about dharma and truth, I will not do wrong.

18 I will not do it!
Excellent gods, you may go.
Remember in this connection
the ancient song of Brahmā:

19 'The person who betrays
a refugee, indeed
finds himself betrayed
when he is in need.
At sowing time for him
there is no seed.
No rain with fructify
this man's misdeed.

20 The gods do not honour
the man who betrays
a terror-stricken friend
to shelterless days.
He is turned away from heaven
for his evil ways,
His oblations are refused
by the gods always.

21 The thunderbolt of Indra
destroys a man
who betrays a shelter-seeker
to an enemy's plan.
His children live only
the briefest span,
His ancestors quarrel
whenever they can.'

22 Because I know this to be so,
 I will not turn over Śacī,
the beloved queen
 of Śakra-Indra.

23 What is good for her
 will be good for me also.
Act for her good, O excellent gods.
 I will not deliver Śacī."

24 The gods and gandharvas said
 to their guru:
"O Bṛhaspati, decide on the best course
 to follow."

25 Bṛhaspati said: "Get Nahuṣa
 to give some time
to the auspicious devī.
 This will help her – and us.

26 Kāla is very complex, O gods.
 Kāla breeds Kāla. Deed delivers doom.
Nahuṣa has a boon
 that has gone to his head."

27 These words of Bṛhaspati pleased the gods;
 they said:
"Excellent words, O Brahmin,
 meant for the gods' welfare.

28 Let this be so, twice-born one.
 Let us secure
the devī's agreement."
 Agni and the other gods
approached Indrāṇi-Śacī
 and spoke these gentle words:

29 "Lady of truth, you who uphold
 the moving and unmoving worlds' life,
sole wife,
 go to Nahuṣa.

30 Mischief-bent Nahuṣa
 is sick with kāma for you –
his end is near, and you, O devī,
 will rule with Śakra-Indra."

31 Assuring herself on this matter,
the modest wife of Indra
went to fearful Nahuṣa
to attain her end.

32 Ill-ātmaned Nahuṣa saw
her beauty and her youth,
and revelled
in his kāma-intoxication.

## SECTION THIRTEEN

1 Nahuṣa, rājā of the gods,
saw her approach
and said, "Sweet-smiling lady,
I am three-worlds-ruling Indra.

2 Lovely-thighed, shining-skinned lady,
have me as husband."
The virtuous lady,
hearing these words of Nahuṣa.

3 Shuddered like a plantain tree
in a thunderstorm.
She bowed before Brahmā
and performed *añjali*,

4 And said to the fearful-faced
rājā of the gods:
"O chief of the gods, I need time
to make up my mind.

5 I do not know where Śakra-Indra is,
where he has gone.
If I cannot, O lord, get any information
about him,

6 I will accept you.
I say this in all truth."
These words of Indrāṇī-Sacī
enchanted Nahuṣa.

7 He said, "Lovely-thighed one,
let it be as you have said.
Keep your word,
and come to me."

8 The auspicious illustrious lady,
dismissed by Nahuṣa,
emerged from the palace
and returned to Bṛhaspati's abode.

9 Her pledge made the gods,
headed by Agni,
decide to adopt a course of action
suited for Śakra-Indra's welfare.

10 They consulted the god of gods,
lord Viṣṇu;
the worried gods, expert in the art
of eloquence, said:

11 "Śakra-Indra is depressed by his crime
of Brahmin-murder.
Lord, god of gods, our refuge,
born before birth of earth!

12 You who assumed Viṣṇu-form
to save all life!
In reality you slew Vṛtra, but Vāsava-Indra
accepts the blame of Brahmin-murder.

13 O show us the way to redeem ourselves,
O lord of the gods!"
Viṣṇu-heard the gods supplicate him
in this manner,

14 And said: "Let Indra propitiate me,
I will cleanse his thunderbolt.
Let the Pāka-slayer
sacrifice a horse,

15 And be restored to his pre-eminence
as lord of the gods. Let him be fearless.
Wicked Nahuṣa's own karma
will destroy Nahuṣa.

16 As for you, O gods,
cultivate the art of patience."
Heeding these true, auspicious
and nectar-sweet words of Viṣṇu,

17 The gods, their teachers, and the mahā-ṛṣis
hurried to the spot
where Śakra-Indra lay paralysed
by fear.

18 To free mahātmā Mahendra-Indra,
they performed an *aśvamedha* sacrifice
that had the power of absolving
a Brahmin-murderer.

19 And so the crime of Brahmin-murder
was distributed, O Yudhiṣṭhira,
among trees, rivers, mountains, earth
and women.

20 In this way it freed
the chief of the gods;
Vāsava-Indra was crime-cleansed,
and made whole again.

21 Bala-slaying Indra saw Nahuṣa,
all-power-absorbing,
and made invulnerable by the boon,
unafraid of him.

22 Śacī's husband Indra vanished
into thin air;
he waited as an invisible being
for his opportunity.

23 Because Śakra-Indra was invisible,
Śacī moaned inconsolably;
the devī in deep sorrow wailed,
"Hai Śakra-Indra!

24 If ever I have given charity,
or offered oblations,
or pleased my gurus, or spoken truth,
let me be your wife only!

25 I *namaskāra* the pure and holy devī,
    the *uttarāyaṇa* night
of the northern solstice:
    make true my hopes."

26 She offered a pure mind and body
    to the devī of the night;
her truth and purity
    strengthened her insight. To Upaśruti,

27 The inseeing divinity of night,
    she said: "O devī!
Let truth reveal truth!
    Show me the rājā of the gods."

## SECTION FOURTEEN

1 The entrancing devī Upaśruti
    appeared before her.
Seeing the goddess of grace
    and youth,

2 The queen of Indra was happy,
    She offered pūjā-respect
and said, "O lovely-faced one,
    who are you?"

3 "Devī," replied Upaśrutī,
    "I am Upaśruiti, divination personified.
O lovely one!
    Your truth obtains my darshan.

4 You are pure, you follow the rules of life,
    you have self-control,
I will show you
    Vṛtra-slayer Śakra-Indra.

5 Come with me – and prosper!
    You will soon see
the chief god."
    Indrāṇī-Śacī followed the devī.

6 They traversed many forests of the gods,
many hills,
including the Himālaya,
till they reached the extreme north.

7 They crossed the sea
of innumerable *yojanas*
and came to a lushly
tree-and-creeper-covered mahā-island.

8 They saw a lake there
suitable for the gods –
a bird-haunted spot –
many *yojanas* long and broad.

9 O Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira! There they glimpsed
thousands of celestial five-coloured lotuses,
in full bloom, with swarms of bees
hovering over them.

10 In the middle of the lake
they saw a single
resplendently white mahā-lotus
blossoming multi-foliate.

11 They dived inside that special lotus;
there, in the stalk
they saw Śatakratu-Indra of a hundred sacrifices
hiding.

12 Seeing Indra crouching inside
in a shrunken condition,
the devī also contracted herself –
as did Upaśruti.

13 Indrāṇī-Śacī honoured her lord Indra
by praising him about his feats.
Purandara-Indra was gratified,
and asked her:

14 "Why have you come here?
How did you know I was here?"
She told him all
about Nahuṣa.

15 "Power over the three worlds
and pride in his prowess
made him demand, O Śatakratu-Indra,
that I attend on him.

16 He has given me time
to make up my mind.
If you fail me, my radiant lord,
he will claim me.

17 That is why I had to hurry to you, my lord.
O Śakra-Indra!
O my mahā-muscled husband,
kill wicked Nahuṣa.

18 Slayer of Daityas and Dānavas,
show yourself, prove your ātman!
Display your prowess
and assume royal power-over the gods!"

## SECTION FIFTEEN

1 Bhagavān-Indra listened;
then he said to Śacī:
"Nahuṣa is stronger.
I dare not test my strength.

2 He propitiated the ṛṣis
and received special powers.
O lovely one! Let me advise a prudent course
for you to follow.

3 Observe the strictest secrecy;
let none know of it.
My slim-waisted wife,
go to Nahuṣa and tell him:

4 'Lord of the world!
Come to me in a vehicle
fit for gods and borne by ṛṣis.
This will please me:

5 The lotus-eyed queen listened to her husband,
the rājā of the gods,
and said, "I will do so,"
and approached Nahuṣa.

6 Nahuṣa was astonished to see her.
"You are welcome, lovely-hipped lady.
Sweet-smilling one,
what do you wish?

7 Slim-waisted one! Consider me your *bhakta.*
What do you desire,
gracious free-spirited lady?
I will do whatever you desire.

8 There is no need to feel shy.
Trust in me, lovely-thighed devī.
I swear by truth
I am yours."

9 The queen of Indra replied:
"O lord of the world,
give me time.
In time you will be my husband.

10 O rājā of the gods,
I have one desire only.
I will tell is to you.
Please fulfil it, O rājā.

11 I ask you this because I know
you love me.
Indra possessed as vehicles elephants,
horses, and chariots.

12 O lord of the gods, order a vehicle
never possessed by anyone before –
not by Viṣṇu, or Rudra-Śiva,
or the anti-gods and rākṣasas.

13 All that I wish is to see you,
O my radiant rājā,
carried by dignified ṛṣis
in this unique conveyance.

14 Not the equal of the gods or anti-gods –
my lord,
you feed yourself
on the energy of others –
you are superior to them,
O magnificent one!"

15 Nahuṣa was overjoyed
with these sentiments;
the chief of the gods said
to the faultless lady:

16 "Exquisite-complexioned, lovely-faced devī,
the conveyance you desire
is the only one of its kind.
An excellent idea!

17 The man who has munis to carry him
is truly great.
I have tapasyā,
I am lord of was, is, and shall be.

18 My wrath consumes the world,
and my pleasure alone preserves it.
Gods, Dānavas, gandharvas,
Kinnaras, rākṣasas, *uraga*-serpents –

19 Even all the three worlds together
cannot survive my displeasure.
My eyes suck energy
from what they see.

20 Devī, I will do as you say.
I am determined.
The seven ṛṣis – all Brahma-ṛṣis –
must carry me, O lovely lady.
And you will witness the glory
of my prowess!"

21 Nahuṣa said this to the lovely-faced devī
and dismissed her.
He yoked many ṛṣis
to his chariot.

22 Because power, pride and impulse
had turned his head
and made him un-Brahmin-like,
the scoundrel behaved like this.

23 Śacī left Nahuṣa
and said to Bṛhaspati:
"Very little remains of the time
Nahuṣa granted me.

24 I am devoted to you. Help me,
and search out Śakra-Indra soon."
Bṛhaspati replied:
"I will do so.

25 You need not fear
wicked-minded Nahuṣa.
He is not eternal.
The rascal is already almost finished.

26 Such atrocious adharma –
to yoke mahā-ṛṣis to his chariot!
Gracious one, I will perform sacrifices
for his destruction.

27 I will go to Śakra-Indra. Do not fear.
You will prosper."
Bṛhaspati lit the sacred fire,
and offered the ritual oblations.

28 Mahā-radiant Bṛhaspati propitiated Agni
for the sake of the rājā of the gods.
He said to Agni:
"Go, search and find Indra."

29 And then, the god of fire Agni,
consumer of oblations,
suddenly assumed a female form
and mysteriously vanished.

30 He scoured all countries,
he searched in mountains and forests
and all outlying areas,
earth and sky,
with the swiftness of thought,
and returned to Bṛhaspati.

31 "I can nowhere see the rājā of the gods,"
Agni reported.
"Only the waters remain unsearched.
I cannot go there.

32 I have never entered water. O Brahmin.
What should I do?"
The guru of the gods ordered:
"Enter the waters, O mahā-radiant one!"

33 "I cannot enter water," said Agni.
"I will perish.
I seek your protection.
O mahā-bustrous one, may you prosper!

34 From water rose fire,
from Brahmin came Kṣatriya,
from stone, iron. Their power is powerless
against their origin."

## SECTION SIXTEEN

1 Bṛhaspati said:
"You are the mouth of the gods, Agni.
You receive oblations.
You secretly witness all life.

2 The poets extol you as the One,
as the Three-in-one.
O oblation-receiver,
without you the universe is void.

3 Bowing to you,
Brahmins go with their wives and sons
to the eternal regions which they gain
through their karma.

4 Agni, receiver of sacred oblations,
you are yourself the finest oblation.
You are the real object
of yajña-worship.

5 O oblation-receiver,
three-worlds-creator,
three-worlds-consumer,
O god of fire,
creator of life,
destroyer of life!

6 The learned say that you, Agni,
give gifts of cloud-waters.
Your lightnings and flames
consume the worlds.

7 Water is your gift.
The worlds are your gift.
O Pāvaka-Agni! O great purifier,
you know all the three worlds.

8 Everything goes happily to its creator;
so, Agni,
go fearlessly into water,
while I chant the eternal Brahma-mantras."

9 Praised and propitiated,
the consumer of oblations, Bhagavān Agni,
the celestial poet-seer said to Bṛhaspati
with deep satisfaction:
"I will show you Śakra-Indra.
I speak this truly."

10 The god of fire penetrated the waters
including lakes and small seas,
and came where Śatakratu-Indra
lay hidden.

11 Rooting in the lotuses of the lake,
O bull-brave Bharata,
Agni spotted Devendra-Indra
hiding in a stem.

12 He rushed back to Bṛhaspati
with the information
that the lord was hiding shrunk
within a lotus.

13 Bṛhaspati hurried there,
with a host of gandharvas and celestial ṛṣis,
and extolled
the feats of Bala-slayer Indra.

14 "O Śakra-Indra!
Slayer of the anti-god Namuci!
Slayer of Bala and Śamba, both
Of horrenduos prowess!

15 O Indra of a hundred sacrifices! Śatakratu!
Grow in strength,
And destroy all your enemies!
Rise, Śakra-Indra!
The celestial ṛṣis welcome you!

16 Mahā-Indra! O radiant one!
You killed the Dānavas
And saved the three worlds.
With the foam of the waters
And the supreme grace of Viṣṇu,
You slew Vṛtra!
O rājā of the gods,
O lord of the universe,

17 O refuge of the worlds!
O goal of the worlds!
None is your equal!
Energister of creatures, Śakra,
Creator of the glory
of the gods in heaven!

18 O Mahendra-Indra, rule the three worlds
and grow in glory!"
These words of praise slowly restored
Indra's self-confidence.

19 He re-assumed his own form, he recovered his energy;
he said to Bṛhaspati-guru in front of him:

20 "What still remains to be done?
The mahā-bodied anti-god son of Tvaṣṭā,
the three-worlds-destroying Vṛtra
is dead."

21 Bṛhaspati replied: "The human rājā Nahuṣa,
with the celestial help of ṛṣis
controls heaven
and oppresses the gods."

22 Indra asked: "How was Nahuṣa able
to gain hard-to-obtain power over heaven?
What is the source
of his tapasyā-power?
How did he usurp Indra's glory?
O Bṛhaspati! Tell me everything."

23 Bṛhaspati replied:
"After you left, the gods
sought another mahā-Indra.
The *pitṛs* and ṛṣis,
the gods and gandharvas
conferred together.

24 They said to Nahuṣa:
'Lord of the world,
be rājā of heaven.'
Nahuṣa replied:
'I am weak – I need
tapasyā and shakti.'

25 Immediately the gods
infused him with power
and he became rājā;
the ill-ātmaned ruler
of the three worlds now
yokes ṛṣis to his chariot.

26 His gaze is like poison –
whoever he looks at
is sucked of energy.
The gods are traumatised.
They hide, being afraid -
to face Nahuṣa directly."

27 Even as Bṛhaspati,
Aṅgiras' noble son,
was speaking, Lokapāla Kubera
and Yama, the son
of Vivasvat, and Soma
and Varuṇa arrived.

28 They said to Indra:
"Good that the son of Tvaṣṭā,
Vṛtra, is slain.
It is good
Śakra-Indra is safe,
his enemies dead."

29 Mahendra-Indra
happily greeted
the great world-guardians
He spoke individually
to each, to know more
about Nahuṣa, saying:

30 "The rājā of the gods
Nahuṣa is fearsome,
I seek your assistance."
They said: "It is true
Nahuṣa is fearsone.
His gaze is poisonous.

31 If you can overthrow
Nahuṣa, O Śakra-Indra,
we become entitled
to ritual oblations."
And Indra replied:
"Kubera and Yama
and Indra will share
the crowning of kingship
together with me.

32 With help from the gods,
we will together
vanquish our enemy,
fierce-eyed Nahuṣa."
Agni said, "Indra,
give me a share,
and receive my assistance."
"Agni and Indra
will share equally."

33 With these words,
Indra the slayer of Pāka
gave Kubera all wealth
and lordship over the yakṣas.

34 After appropriate deliberation,
Śakra-Indra gave to Vaivasvata-Yama
lordship over the *pitṛs*
and to Varuṇa over the waters.

## SECTION SEVENTEEN

1 While the intelligent rājā of the gods
planned the destruction of Nahuṣa
with help
from gods and Lokapālas,

2 Tapasyā-practising bhagavān Agastya came,
greeted Devendra-Indra,
and said: "Good that you have killed
the anti-god

3 Vṛtra who could assume multiple forms;
good, Purandara-Indra,
that Nahuṣa has been dethroned;
good that all your enemies,
O slayer of Bala,
have been removed."

4 "Mahā-ṛṣi," said Indra;
"I am pleased to welcome you.
Accept my *arghya,*
and my gift of a cow."

5 The finest of munis was offered pūjā;
after he was comfortably seated,
Indra asked
the bull-brave Brahmin:

6 "Tell me, O finest of the twice-born,
how wicked Nahuṣa's dethronement occurred.
Narate to me, bhagavān, revered one,
his fall from heaven."

7 Agastya replied: "I will narrate
how ill-ātmaned rājā Nahuṣa,
filled with pride,
fell from heaven.

8 The celestial ṛṣis and Brahma-ṛṣis who were compelled
to carry wicked Nahuṣa's palanquin
soon succumbed
to exhaustion.

9 They asked,
'Tell us if the mantras
chanted at the cow-sprinkling ritual
are authentic.

10 Do you have faith in them, O Vāsava-Indra?"
Foolish Nahuṣa
intoxicated with pride said,
'No, they are futile.'

11 'But that is adharma,' the ṛṣis said.
'You do not know dharma,
The mahā-ṛṣis assured us
they were authentic.'

12 He started disputing with the ṛṣis;
driven by his adharma,
he placed his foot on my head,"
said Agastya.

13 "Immediately his energy started ebbing.
Bewildered and afraid,
he was struck speechless.
I said to him:

14 'Rājā, you have presumed
to doubt the value
of ancestor-honoured
and Brahmin-chanted mantras.

15 Fool, you have dared make menials
Of the ṛṣis who equal Brahmā.

16 You are to be thrown out of heaven
for foot-insulting them.
Go, live out on earth
the little remaining merit you have!

17 You will wander, in snake-form,
for ten thousand years;
after that period,
you will regain heaven.'

18 That is how ill-ātmaned Nahuṣa
fell from heaven.
Good we are rid
of that thorn among Brahmins.

19 And you, lord of Śacī,
you should go to heaven and rule;
be self-disciplined, conquer your foes,
and receive the mahā-ṛṣis' praise."

20 The gods were overjoyed;
so were the mahā-ṛṣis,
the *pitṛs* and the yakṣas,
as well as the rākṣasas

21 And gandharvas and apsarās,
and the daughters of the gods.
The lakes and seas, rivers and mountains
rejoiced.

22 All came before Indra and said: "O foe-destroyer!
It is good wicked Nahuṣa has been killed,
and cursed to become a snake
by wise Agastya."

## SECTION EIGHTEEN

1 Śakra-Indra,
extolled by the gandharvas and apsarās,
mounted the auspiciously-marked
Indra-among-elephants Airāvata.

2 Mahā-lustrous Pāvaka-Agni,
mahā-ṛṣi Bṛhaspati,
Yama and Varuṇa,
and the lord of wealth Dhaneśvara-Kubera,

3 Gandharvas and apsarās
and the other gods
surrounded Vṛtra-slaying Śakra-Indra,
lord of the three worlds.

4 Mahendra-Indra of a hundred sacrifices
was reunited with his queen,
and happily
ruled in heaven.

5 Indra saw Aṅgiras in heaven,
and Aṅgiras pūjā-respected Indra
with mantras
from the Atharva-Veda.

6 Bhagavān Indra was so pleased
that he offered a boon to Aṅgiras
even as he was chanting
from the Atharva:

7 "This Veda will be known
as the Atharvāṅgirasa;
and you will receive a share
of all yajñas."

8 The rājā of the gods,
Śatakratu-Indra of a hundred sacrifices
offered pūjā-respect to Aṅgiras
before seeing him depart.

9 He also offered pūjā to the thirteen
tapasyā-rich rsis. O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
Happy Indra ruled over his subjects
with deep dharma.

10 This was how Indra and his queen suffered;
he was forced
to hide himself
in order to rout his enemies.

11 O Indra-among-rājās! That is why you must ignore
what you suffered
in the mahā-forest with Draupadī
and your mahātmā-brothers.

12 You too – O Indra-among-rājās!
O Kaurava Bharata! –
will recover your kingdom –
as Śakra-Indra recovered his, by killing Vṛtra.

13 Wrong-motived, wicked-minded Nahuṣa,
enemy of Brahmins,
was overthrown by Agastya
and ruined for a very long time.

14 Your ill-ātmaned enemies,
Karṇa, Duryodhana and others,
will also soon meet with ruin,
O destroyer of foes.

15 You will then enjoy
this sea-surrounded earth,
O hero, with your brothers
and this illustrious lady Draupadī.

16 This narrative of Śakra-Indra's victory
ranks as a Veda;
a war-ready rājā desiring victory
should listen to it.

17 Because I wanted you victorious, O Yudhiṣṭhira,
I narrated it in full.
When the mahātmās are praised,
they grant success.

18 Yudhiṣṭhira! The crimes of Duryodhana
and the might of Bhīma and Arjuna
make the ruin
of even mahātmā Kṣatriyas inevitable.

19 Whoever devotedly recites the story
of Indra's victory
is absolved of crimes, goes to heaven,
and enjoys this life and the after-life.

20 He will not be sonless,
he need not fear enemies.
He will live long,
and survive all threats.
He will always be victorious,
never humiliated.

21 O bull-brave Janamejaya!
Dharma-excellent Yudhiṣṭhira, inspired by Śalya
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
offered him his pūjā-respect.

22 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
after listening to Śalya,
spoke as follows to the maha-muscled
rājā of Madra:

23 "You have agreed to act
as Karṇa's charioteer;
you will undermine Karṇa
by stressing Arjuna's excellence."

24 "I will do as you ask me,"
replied Śalya.
"I will do for you
all there is in my power to do."

25 The ruler of Madra, Śrīmān Śalys,
left Kuntī's sons.
O foe-slaying Janamejaya!
The powerful ruler took his army to Duryodhana.

## SECTION NINETEEN

1 Next to approach Yudhiṣṭhira
was the mahā-chariot-warrior
Yuyudhāna-Śatyaki of the Sātvatas,
leading his four-fold army.

2 His mahā-valiant soldiers were recruited
from many lands;
heroes, wearing magnificent uniforms,
graced his army.

3 Battle-axes, hand-hurled missiles, spears,
lances, clubs,
staves, nooses,
and glittering stainless swords,

4 Two-bladed scimitars, daggers
and all makes of arrows
dazzled the eyes – some were polished
with special oils.

5 The army of Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki
resembled a formidable array
of dark storm-clouds,
and the weapons flashed like lightning.

6 O rājā! That army, an *akṣauhiṇī* strong,
reinforced Yudhiṣṭhira's,
blending into it as a river
blends in the ocean.

7 Similarly the *akṣauhiṇī*-strong army
of Dhṛṣṭaketu,
as strong as the Cedis,
joined the powerful Pāṇḍavas.

8 The mahā-powerful son of king Jarāsandha
of Magadha, Jayatsena,
came to dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
with one *akṣauhiṇī*.

9 O Indra-among-rājās,
many ruler of the sea-coast territories
came to Yudhiṣṭhira
with their forces.

10 When all the finely-attired soldiers
had assembled, O rājā,
that magnificently-strong army
was a sight to see.

11 The army of Drupada was recruited
from many lands
and boasted of many heroes
including mahā-chariot-hero Drupada's sons.

12 Rājā Virāṭa of Matsya brought an army
consisting largely
of skilled warriors
from the hilly regions.

13 The mahātmā sons of Pāṇḍu
were reinforced
by seven *akṣauhiṇīs*
under different flags,

14 All eager to rush into battle
against the Kauravas.
The Pāṇḍavas rejoiced.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son rejoiced also,

15 Because king Bhagadatta supplied him
an *akṣauhiṇī*
of yellow-skinned Cīna warriors
and Kirātas,

16 The whole presenting a spectacle
of blossoming *karṇikāra*-trees.
Similarly, Bhūriśravas and valiant Śalya,
O Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira,

17 Assisted Duryodhana,
each with one *akṣauhiṇī*.
Hṛdīka's son Kṛtavarman, Bhojas,
Andhakas, Kukuras,

18 Joined Duryodhana with an *akṣauhiṇī*
each of troops.
These tiger-like heroes wearing garlands
of wild flowers

19 Looked like a forest
filled with playful musth elephants.
The people of Sindhu and Sauvīra,
led by Jayadratha,

20 And many other rulers of the earth
arrived with hill-shaking grandeur.
The army looked
enchantingly beautiful,

21 Like clouds of all shapes
driven by the wind.
The ruler of Kāmboja, Sudakṣiṇa,
Yavanas and Śakas,

22 Joined Duryodhana with one *akṣauhiṇī;*
the soldiers
looked like a swarm of locusts
shrouding the earth.

23 It merged into the Kaurava ranks
and seemed to vanish.
Similarly, the army of king Nīla
of Mahiṣmati

24 Vanished: it came from the south
armed with dark-blue weapons.
The larger armies
of the two kings of Avantī

25 Joined Duryodhana,
each with an *akṣauhiṇī,*
followed by the Kekaya brothers,
the five rulers of the earth,

26 Bringing another *akṣauhiṇī*
that delighted Duryodhana.
Many mahātmā rulers from many other countries,
O bull-brave Bharata,

27 Brought three additional armies,
and very soon
the forces of Duryodhana
numbered eleven *akṣauhiṇīs.*

28 All carried multi-coloured flags, O rājā,
and all were eager to fight.
There was no space left free
in the capital Hastināpura

29 Even for the leaders
of Duryodhana's own forces.
The five-river lands, Kṛtsna,
the Kurujāṅgala forest,

30 The forest of Rohitaka,
the dry Marubhūmi areas,
Ahicchatra, Kālakūṭa, the banks of the Gaṅgā,
O Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira,

31 Vāraṇa, Vāṭadhāna,
the mountains of Yāmuna –
these corn-filled lands overflowed
with the Kauravas.

32 The *purohita* sent to negotiate
saw these soldiers
of Duryodhana
wherever he went and looked –

33 The emissary sent by the rājā
Of Pāñcāla to the Kaurava camp.

## SECTION TWENTY

1 Drupada's *purohita* (said Vaiśampāyana)
approached Kaurava Duryodhana,
and was welcomed by Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Bhīṣma and Vidura.

2 He announced the welfare of the Pāṇḍavas,
enquired
about the health of all present,
and continued:

3 "Everyone knows what the eternal dharma
of a raja is.
Yet I will speak of such dharma
before I begin.

4 Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu
are sons of the same father
and have equal inheritance rights.
This is well-known.

5 The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra have received
their paternal wealth.
Why have the sons of Pāṇḍu failed
to receive theirs?

6 You all know how in the past
Pāṇḍu's sons
were prevented by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
from claiming their rights.

7 They schemed against their lives,
but were frustrated
from despatching Pāṇḍu's sons
to the realm of Yama.

8 Subala's son Śakuni and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
meanly contrived
to forcibly seize the kingdom
of the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas.

9 Dhṛtarāṣṭra allowed this condemnable deed
to happen;
the Pāṇḍavas spent thirteen years
in the mahā-forest.

10 Problems for the heroes and their wife
in the sabhā,
and terrifying problems during their exile
in the forest.

11 Problems for the mahātmās
in the city of Virāṭa –
problems such as those of vicious men
experiencing re-birth.

12 Yet they have put aside the memories
of their afflictions,
and are now ready to make peace
with the bull-brave Kauravas.

13 Their character is well known,
as is that of Duryodhana.
Let honest intermediaries persuade
Duryodhana suitably.

14 The Pāṇḍava heroes do not want war
with Duryodhana,
They do not claim rights
through the worlds' ruination.

15 Duryodhana's reason to wage war
is absurd;
it is no reason, because the Pāṇḍavas
are stronger.

16 Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
has seven *akṣauhiṇīs*
all waiting for his signal
to proceed against the Kauravas.

17 He has tiger-strong allies, each the equal
of a thousand *akṣauhiṇīs*
such as Sātyaki, and Bhīma,
and the mahā-powerful twin brothers.

18 On one side
are the eleven Kaurava *akṣauhiṇīs*;
on the other mahā-muscled
and multi-versatile Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

19 Diadem-decked Arjuna singly surpasses
the entire Kaurava army,
and so does the mahā-radiant,
mahā-muscled Vāsudeva-Krishna.

20 Who will dare oppose
these gigantic forces
that have Kirīṭin-Arjuna's prowess
and Krishna's wisdom?

21 Remember your promise
and abide by dharma.
Return what should be returned
while there is still time."

## SECTION TWENTY-ONE

1 Mahā-radiant, old and wise Bhīṣma
heard these words,
offered pūjā-respect to their speaker,
and replied in this manner:

2 "It is good news that Dāmodara-Krishna
and the Pāṇḍavas are well,
that they have allies,
that they are guided by dharma.

3 It is good that our Pāṇḍava cousin-brothers
desire peace,
it is good they do not harbour belligerence
for their relatives.

4 Your words have the ring of truth;
they are hard and to the point.
I think this is so
because you are a Brahmin.

5 Pāṇḍu's sons have passed
through intense hardships in the forest,
and dharma dictates
they deserve their paternal share.

6 Diadem-wearing powerful Kirīṭin-Arjuna
is a mahā-chariot-hero
expert in the use of weapons.
Who can stand against Pārtha-Arjuna?

7 Even thunder-wielding Vajra-dhara Indra
cannot defeat Arjuna;
how can mere bow-experts?
I think he can conquer the three worlds."

8 Karṇa passionately and insultingly
interrupted Bhīṣma;
Karṇa glanced at Duryodhana,
and said:

9 "Brahmin, what you say is nothing new:
it is common knowledge.
Why do you have to repeat it
again and again?

10 Long ago, Śakunī, playing for Duryodhana,
defeated Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira at dice;
so Yudhiṣṭhira
went into forest exile.

11 Forgetting his pledge, foolish Yudhiṣṭhira,
bolstered by the armies
of Matsya and Pāñcāla,
now demands his paternal share.

12 O intelligent one,
Duryodhana will not surrender
one foot of ground out of fear;
for dharma he may give the whole earth.

13 If they want their ancestral kingdom
returned to them,
let them continue forest-exile
till the agreed period.

14 After which let them come and unafraid
ask for Duryodhana's protection.
But they must avoid any course
involving adharma.

15 If Pāṇḍu's sons forsake dharma
and insist on war,
they will have to face the Kaurava heroes.
Let them remember this."

16 "Son of Rādhā, you talk too much," said Bhīṣma.
"It's deeds that matter.
Remember: singlehanded Arjuna overcame
six chariot-heroes.

17 You have yourself witnessed his feats
on many occasions.
If we ignore the advice
of this Brahmin emissary,
Arjuna will make us eat dust;
he will kill us in battle."

18 Dhṛtarāṣṭra rebuked Rādheya-Karṇa
and commended Bhīṣma
(continued Vaiśampāyana);
he spoke as follows:

19 "What Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma says
is meant to promote our welfare,
as well as that of the Pāṇḍavas
and of the whole world.

20 It is my considered opinion
that I send Sañjaya
to Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons.
Return therefore immediately to the Pāṇḍavas."

21 Dhṛtarāṣṭra honoured the Brahmin
and sent him back.
Then he summoned Sañjaya to the sabhā
and said:

## SECTION TWENTY-TWO

1 "Sañjaya, I hear
that the sons of Pāṇḍu
are in Upaplavya.
Verify this. Say
to Ajātaśātru-Yudhiṣṭhira,
'It is good you are here.'

2 To all, O Sañjaya,
convey our regards.
Overcoming hardships,
the well-meaning Pāṇḍavas,
honest and noble,
are friendly to all.

3 Never once did I find
any falsehood in them.
The wealth that they won
by the strength of their prowess
was always, O Sañjaya,
entrusted to me.

4 In spite of my efforts,
I never detected
impropriety in them;
steady in dharma and artha,
they depend on themselves
for all their achievements.

5 With patience and wisdom
they overcame hunger
and heat and cold,
sloth, anger and pleasure;
they are stable in dharma
and artha and yoga.

6 To their friends they offered
shares in their wealth,
nourishing the friendship;
they honour where honour
is due; no Kaurava
really hates them,

7 Save fanatic Duryodhana,
who is foolish and wicked,
and still meaner Karṇa.
O Sañjaya, my son
Duryodhana's afflicted
with a passionate whim.

8 His burning desire
is to suppress
the Pāṇḍava mahātmās.
So Karṇa and he
keep fanning
the wrath of the Pāṇḍavas.

9 Duryodhana is excellent
at conniving and scheming.
Pampered and proud,
he thinks he has ways
of cheating the Pāṇḍavas
of their rightful inheritance.

10 Provide Ajātaśatru-
Yudhiṣṭhira his share,
for Arjuna helps him,
and Krishna and Sātyaki,
and wolf-waisted Bhīma,
the twins and the Sṛñjayas.

11 The Gāṇḍīva-wielder Jiṣṇu-
Savyasācī-Arjuna
can conquer the earth;
so can Keśava-Krishna,
the lord-of-the-three worlds'
victorious mahātmā.

12 The perfect hero
of the worlds is Arjuna.
Where is the man
who will face his arrows
roaring like clouds
and swarming like locusts?

13 Sitting in his chariot,
with the help of his Gāṇḍīva,
Arjuna subdued
the Kauravas of the north
and the south, and made
the Draviḍas his allies.

14 With his Gāṇḍīva bow
Savyasācī-Arjuna
subdued the Indra-led gods;
he gratified Jātaveda-Agni
in the Khāṇḍava-forest
for Pāṇḍava-glory.

15 Who equals Bhīma
in use of the mace
or elephant-combat?
Ten-thousand-elephant-
valiant Bhīma
is the equal of Arjuna.

16 As a furious foe,
mighty Bhīma
can burn Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.
The power of his anger
is such even-Vāsava-Indra
cannot defeat him.

17 The twin sons of Mādrī
are confident and strong,
trained by Phālguna-Arjuna;
like two birds of prey
they will devour
their flocks of enemies.

18 Our massive forces
are as good as dead
in combat with them.
The powerful Pāṇḍavas
have Dhṛṣṭadyumna
also as ally.

19 That Somaka ruler
is fully dedicated
to the Pāṇḍavas' cause.
And where is the man
who dares face Yudhiṣṭhira's
Krishna-led forces?

20 The elderly ruler
of Matsya, Virāṭa,
is familiar with the Pāṇḍavas;
he and his sons
have sworn to assist
the cause of Yudhiṣṭhira.

21 The five Kekaya
brothers whose kingdom
was usurped by us
have joined the Pāṇḍavas
and eagerly wait
to take their revenge.

22 The world's greatest heroes
unitedly stand
for the Pāṇḍava cause.
I am told their bhakti
for dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
cannot be questioned.

23 The noble-born heroes
of the mountainous regions,
and *mlecchas* adept
in the use of weapons,
united, support
the cause of the Pāṇḍavas.

24 The equal of Indra,
the mahātmā rājā,
the powerful Pāṇḍya,
accompanied by heroes,
has come to support
the Pāṇḍava cause;

25 And Sātyaki who learnt
the handling of weapons
from Droṇa and Kṛpa,
Arjuna and Vāsudeva-Krishna,
and Bhīma; in valour
he equals Kārṣṇi-Pradyumna.

26 The warriors of Cedi
and Karūṣa assembled
earlier with large
contingents of soldiers
led by the radiant
ruler of Cedi,

27 Invincible in battle,
incomparable bowman,
great Śiśupāla.
Yet Krishna devised
a means of eliminating
him and his Kṣatriyas.

28 The same Śiśupāla
whom the rājā of Karūsa
and other kings-honoured
was destroyed by a glance
from Krishna, and Pāṇḍava
glory augmented.

29 The rulers scattered
like small creatures fleeing
at the sight of a lion
when they saw Keśava-Krishna
in his white-horsed chariot
was unassailable.

30 Dead like a storm-
uprooted *karṇikāra*
lies Śiśupāla, who dared
in his insolence
fight from his chariot
against Vāsudeva-Krishna.

31 O son of Gavalgaṇa, Sañjaya,
when I learn of the help
Keśava Krishna provides
to the Pāṇḍava brothers,
I am bereft
of all peace of mind.

32 Which forces can fight
the army whose leader
is the Vṛṣṇi-lion Krishna?
I shudder on learning
about both Krishnas riding
in the same chariot.

33 If my foolish son
avoids them, he may survive.
If not, Arjuna and Krishna
will annihilate him,
like Indra and Viṣṇu
did the Daitya antigods.

34 For Arjuna equals Śakra-Indra,
and Vṛṣṇi-Krishna
equals Viṣṇu.
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
is brave, has no enemies,
he delights in dharma.

35 Wronged by Duryodhana, yet patient.
Or else he would long
have wiped out the wicked
sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Bhīma, Arjuna, Vāsudeva-Krishna,
the twins, I do not fear

36 So much as rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
when righteously roused.
His mahā-tapasyā
and his brahmacarya
ensure that his wishes
will be fulfilled.

37 I know he is angry,
and his cause is just,
and I am afraid.
Take a swift chariot,
and hurry to the camp
of the Pāñcāla rājā.

38 Enquire of the health
of Ajātāśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
who has no enemies.
Go to Janārdana-Krishna,
who is brave and noble.
Speak to him gently

39 Concerning his welfare.
Say that Dhṛtarāṣṭra
is ready for peace.
Inconceivable that Kuntī's son
Yudhiṣṭhira will go against
Vāsudeva-Krishna's wishes.

40 Krishna to the Pāṇḍavas
is like their own selves.
He works for their welfare.
Pāṇḍavas and Sṛñjayas,
Yuyudhāna and Virāṭa,
and Janārdana-Krishna –

41 Enquire of their health
on my behalf.
Enquire of the healths
of Draupadī's five sons.
Speak in a manner
that furthers the interests
of the Bharata race.
Say nothing, Sañjaya,
to create ill feeling."

## SECTION TWENTY-THREE



1 Sañjaya, following the instructions
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
went to Upaplavya to meet the illimitably
illustrious Pāṇḍavas.

2 The Sūta's son Sañjaya, approaching
the son of Kuntī, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
respectfully greeted him
before speaking.

3 Gavalgaṇa's son Sañjaya
smilingly said
to Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira:
"O Bharata king, I am happy
you are well, and with friends,
and prospering like Mahendra-Indra.

4 The elderly and wise
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
enquires of your health,
and the health of Bhīma,
and of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and Mādrī's twin sons.

5 How is the firm-in-truth
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
noble-minded lady,
wife of heroes,
whose welfare you seek?
How are her sons?"

6 "Son of Gavalgaṇa,
Sañjaya, I greet you,"
Yudhiṣṭhira replied.
"Your presence gives us pleasure.
I return your good wishes.
We are all well.

7 It is so long
since I have had news
of the Bharata rājā.
Seeing you, Sañjaya,
I feel I have seen
Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself.

8 Is Bhīṣma, our grandfather,
mahā-wise, all-dharma-knowing,
keeping well, dear Sañjaya?
Is Kaurava Bhīṣma
as he used to be,
affectionate to us?

9 Is rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Vicitravīrya's son,
a mahātmā monarch,
keeping well? And his sons?
Is mahārāja Bāhlīka,
son of Pratīpa, well?

10 Is Somadatta well?
What about Bhūriśravas,
Satyasaṁdha, Śala?
And Kṛpa, and Droṇa
said his son Aśvatthāman
the mahā bow-wielder?

11 These bow-wielders, Sañjaya,
famed the world over,
have joined the Kauravas;
they are mahā-learned,
they are skilled in the śāstras,
they are the finest.

12 Are these bow-experts honoured,
*tāta,* dear one?
Are the rulers of a land,
where the great Aśvatthāman
chooses to live,
free from disease?

13 Is mahā-wise Yuyutsu,
the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
by a Vaiśyā woman,
keeping well, *tāta*, dear one?
And Karṇa, adviser
of foolish Suyodhana-Duryodhana?

14 Are the elderly ladies,
mothers of the Bharatas,
kitchen-maids, slave-girls,
daughters-in-law, sons,
sisters' sons, daughter's sons,
free from troubles?

15 Does the rājā continue
to give pensions to Brahmins
as in the past, *tāta,* dear one?
Have Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
discontinued the pensions
I granted to Brahmins?

16 Does rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
treat tolerantly
the misdeeds of Brahmins?
That is the surest
pathway to heaven.
Or is he contemptuous?

17 This is the supreme light
provided by fate
for the welfare of all.
If they stupidly fail
to be tolerant to Brahmins,
the Kauravas are doomed.

18 Do rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and his sons look after
their courtiers and officers?
Or are there enemies,
posing as well-wishers,
plotting his downfall?

19 Do the Kauravas, dear one,
constantly discuss
the crimes of the Pāṇḍavas?
Do Droṇa and the brave
and valiant Kṛpa
speak of our misdeeds?

20 Do the Kauravas regard
Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his sons
as legitimate rulers?
When they face robbers,
do they recall
the exploits of Arjuna?

21 Dear one! Do they recall
the skilful discharge
of Gāṇḍīva-arrows,
the bowtring aquiver,
and the swift-flying shafts
roaring like clouds?

22 I know of no one,
his equal or superior,
who, in one instant,
shoots sixty arrows
excellently-crafted
and exceedingly sharp.

23 And mace-wielding Bhīma
is strong; his foes
on the field fear him.
He fights like an elephant
trampling down reeds.
Do they remember him?

24 Mādrī's son Sahadeva
conquered Dantakūra
and all the Kaliṅgas
with arrows discharged
from right hand and left hand.
Is he remembered?

25 You remember, Śañjaya,
how Nakula conquered
the Śibis and Trigartas,
subduing the west.
Are the sons of Mādrī
remembered by them?

26 The crushing defeat
they faced in the forest
of Dvaita where, captured
by foes, they depended
on Arjuna and Bhīma
to come to their rescue,

27 Where I was in charge
of guarding the rear,
and Bhīma protected
the rear of the twins,
and Arjuna was victor –
is all this remembered?

28 If all these efforts
have failed to convince
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,
is it possible, Sanjaya,
one gesture now
will bring him to his senses?"

## SECTION TWENTY-FOUR

1 And Sañjaya replied:
"You are right, *tāta* Pāṇḍavas.
You have asked how they are.
The excellent Kauravas,
O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
are keeping good health.

2 "Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
is advised by the wise
as well as the wicked.
He gives even to his foes;
why should he suspend
pensions to Brahmins?

3 But Kṣatriya dharma can crush
even those who like you
bear no ill-will – it is brutal.
If Dhṛtarāṣṭra
acted with malice,
he would be harming his friends.

4 He deeply regrets
his part in what happened.
O foe-less Yudhiṣṭhira!
Brahmins have told him
plotting against friends
is the worst of all crimes.

5 O god-like mortal! They remember
your valour in battle,
and Jiṣṇu-Arjuna's victories.
They clearly remember Bhīma
wielding his mace,
and conches and war-drums sounding.

6 They remember the mahā-chariot-hero
twins sons of Mādrī
destroying all foes
on the field of battle
with volleys of arrows,
firm and unafraid.

7 No one knows, O rājā,
how a man will fare
in the future. Consider,
even you, Yudhiṣṭhira,
who cherished all dharmas,
were fated to suffer.
O you-without-enemies,
you are wise, you see suffering
in its proper perspective.

8 The Indra-like sons of Pāṇḍu
will never leave dharma
for kāma and artha.
O you-without-enemies,
your wisdom will find
a sure way to peace

9 For Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,
for Pāṇḍu's sons,
for the Sṛñjayas and others.
O Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira!
Listen to Dhṛtarāṣṭra
who is like your father.

10 Listen to his words, O rājā,
spoken after discussions
with his ministers and sons."

SECTION TWENTY-FIVE

1 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"The Pāṇḍavas and Sṛñjayas,
Janārdana-Krishna, Yuyudhāna,
Virāṭa are all here.
Gāvalgaṇa-Sañjaya!
Present the proposals of Dhṛtarāṣṭra."

2 "I honour the hero without enemies,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
wolf-waisted Bhīma
the twins, Vāsudeva-Śauri-Krishna,
Yuyudhāna, Cekitana, Virāṭa,"
Sañjaya replied,

3 "And the elderly ruler
of Pāñcāla, his son
Dhṛṣṭadyumna as well.
Listen to my words,
spoken for the welfare
of the Kaurava race.

4 Desirous of peace,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra ordered
my chariot readied.
May peace prevail!
Let sons, brothers, friends
agree to live in peace!

5 All dharmas are present
in the Dhāstarāṣṭra brothers –
strength, kindness, candour,
nobility, non-cruelty,
and avoidance of karma
that brings with it shame.

6
Your army is huge,
your character noble,
you cannot act meanly.
Meanness in you
will stand out like
back spot in white cloth.

7
Who will knowingly act
for the ruin of all,
who will seek out hell?
Who will act if he knows,
winning or losing,
the end will be ruin?

8
They only are blessed
who feel for their relatives.
They are true sons and friends
who diligently work
for the well-being
of the Kuru dynasty.

9
Assume that you win,
your enemies are killed.
The rest of your life
will be like death –
for who wants to live
after killing his relatives?

10
And who can defeat you
who have the support
of Keśava-Krishna, Cekitāna,
Sātyaki and Pārṣata-Drupada?
He will lose though the gods
and Indra assist him.

11
O rājā! Who can defeat
the Kauravas who have
Aśvatthāman and Śalya,
Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Kṛpa,
and other lords of the earth,
including Rādheya-Karṇa?

12 Who can think of destroying
the ranks of Duryodhana
without any loss?
It seems to me clear
neither winning nor losing
will bring any good.

13 And why should the Pāṇḍavas
surrender to meanness
and act like the lowborn?
To Vāsudeva-Krishna
and the elderly king of Pāñcāla
I offer my *praṇāma*;

14 I offer you *añjali*,
I seek your protection.
May the Kauravas and Sṛñjayas
prosper equally. Why should
Vāsudeva-Krishna and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
reject my proposals?

15 They should part with their lives
to provide me protection.
Why would they refuse
protection to others?
Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Bhīṣma
are eager for peace."

## SECTION TWENTY-SIX

1 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"When, Sañjaya, have you heard me
recommending war?
Is there a man,
with alternatives to war,
who still wants war?

2 If a man's desires
are satisfied, and he
has nothing to do,
he will prefer, Sañjaya,
not doing anything
to waging a war.

3 Who is so cursed
by the gods as to seek war?
The deeds of the Pāṇḍavas
are aimed at the welfare
and happiness of all,
and not against dharma.

4 We work for the happiness
that rises from dharma.
That man is a fool
who thirsts for happiness,
who seeks to end sorrow
by indulging in pleasures.

5 Such kāma adds fuel
to the flames in his flesh;
he increases his sorrows.
When he freely abandons
his passion for pleasures,
his sorrows are ended.

6 For kāma-and-artha
feed upon desires
like fire upon ghee.
Contrast the pleasures
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
with our austerity.

7 Deserted by Śrī,
the goddess of fortune,
men lose battles,
never hear music,
never wear garlands,
never rub unguents,

8 Never wear silks.
Deserted by fortune,
we went into exile.
This had to be so.
But none of us accepted
our travails as final.

9 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
in trouble, expects
nobility in others.
This is not right.
Let him expect
what he himself practises.

10 The man who discards
a warm log of wood
in winter, and finds
he is trapped in the wind-
fanned flames of the forest,
has himself to blame.

11 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
is affluent enough –
so why does he suffer?
Because he accepted
the advice of his foolish
and ill-motived son.

12 Suyodhana-Duryodhana
rejected Vidura's wisdom,
a friend he considered
an enemy; rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
eager to please him,
preferred adharma.

13 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
to pamper his son,
forgot that Vidura
was learned and eloquent,
and noble, and wishing
the good of the Kauravas.

14 Stripping others of honour,
his son wants honour;
he is jealous, impulsive,
an exploiter of dharma,
in the clutches of kāma,
proud and malicious.

15 Deserted by Śrī, Sañjaya,
he viciously plots
against friends, and harbours
long-standing grudges.
To please him, his father
forsook dharma-and-kāma.

16 At the dice-game, Sañjaya,
I sensed the impending doom
of the Kauravas,
because rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
refused to abide
by the wisdom of Vidura.

17 From the instant they mocked
the advice of Vidura,
the Kauravas were plagued
with incessant misfortune.
When they took his advice,
they always prospered.

18 O Gāvalgaṇa-Sañjaya!
The advisers of greedy
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son are:
Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself,
Śakuni and Karṇa.
See his stupidity!

19 No matter which angle
I choose to see from,
I find that the Kauravas
and Sṛñjayas are doomed.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's a usurper,
and Vidura's in exile.

20 Both father and son
seek control of the world.
How is peace possible?
The wealth in their hands
they consider as totally,
irrevocably theirs.

21 And Karṇa believes
he can humble Arjuna
on the field of battle.
In the past there were battles,
mahā-powerful combats.
What happened to Karṇa?

22 Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
Karṇa, Droṇa, Bhīṣma
and all Kauravas know
there is none in the world
equal to Arjuna
in bowcraft-skill.

23 All the kings and the Kauravas
are fully aware
how the kingdom came
in the hands of Duryodhana,
despite Phālguna-Arjuna,
the destroyer of foes.

24 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
continue to think
they can cheat the Pāṇḍavas,
though they know the valour
of diadem-decked Kirīṭin
bow-wielding Arjuna.

25 The twang of the Gāṇḍīva
has not reached their ears;
they are luckily alive.
Suyodhana-Duryodhana
survives till he faces
anger-filled Bhīma.

26 *Tāta!* Dear Sañjaya!
Even Indra would fear
to battle the Pāṇḍavas;
he dare not challenge
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, Bhīma,
Nakula and Sahadeva.

27 Meanwhile, the rājā
and his son still think
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
can never be routed
on the field of battle
by the sons of Pāṇḍu.

28 You have heard of our hardships.
I respect you, Sañjaya,
so I tolerate those
who plot against us –
what they did, what we did,
it is best to forget.

29 Let things become normal.
I am ready for peace,
as you have advised.
But Suyodhana-Duryodhana
must return Indraprastha,
my share of the kingdom."

## SECTION TWENTY-SEVEN

1 Sañjaya replied: "Pāṇḍava!
Now I see clearly
you are a man of dharma.
Great deeds are possible
though life is transient.
Don't tarnish your fame.

2 Assume they refuse
to return the kingdom;
I think it is better
to live as a beggar
in Andhaka and Vṛṣṇi
than wage war-for a kingdom.

3 Man's life is brief
and filled with suffering;
it is always so volatile.
One should seek honour.
That is why, O Pāṇḍava,
one should avoid ill deeds.

[V:27:4-9]

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4 The cravings of kāma
are obstacles to dharma.
O Indra-of-men,
overcoming kāma,
the wise achieve
inestimable fame.

5 The craving for wealth
is an obstacle to dharma.
He is the wise man
who chooses dharma.
The seeker of kāma
is corrupted by kāma.

6 With dharma to guide him,
a man finds fame, *tāta* Yudhiṣṭhira,
and shines like the sun.
The man without dharma
may win the whole world
but he loses himself.

7 You know the Vedas,
you practise brahmacarya,
you give gifts to Brahmins,
you have dedicated
many years of your life
to the search for happiness.

8 The person who chases
pleasure exclusively
without doing yoga,
will never find happiness;
his wealth will desert him,
kāma will grip him.

9 The fool who abandons
brahmacarya and dharma,
and follows adharma,
will suffer torments
in the other world
after leaving his body.

10 Neither karma that's good
nor karma that's bad
is effaced after death.
It reaches ahead,
whether good or bad,
and the doer follows.

11 Your karma is famous,
like wholesome and tasty
offerings of food
made to Brahmins
on ritual ocasions
with proper ceremonies.

12 We act in this life,
not after we die.
The great and the honest
commend your good deeds
that will fructify later,
O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira.

13 No aging, no death,
no hunger or thirst,
no fear or disgust;
nothing to do,
except incessantly
pamper the senses –

14 The fruits of our karma!
Avoid these fruits, and act,
O Indra-among-men,
eschewing the regions
of anger, and also
the regions of pleasure.

15 Do not, however,
give up truth and discipline,
simplicity, non-injury.
Perform the Rājasūya
and Aśvamedha yajñas,
but never bad karma.

16 If, prompted by envy,
you, Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
indulge in bad karma,
you negate the lessons
of your forest-exile,
the roots of your dharma.

17 It all becomes useless –
your suffering, your separation
from Janārdana-Krishna,
from your followers, your army,
separation also
from brave Yuyudhāna,

18 Separation from
the rājā of Matsya
on his golden chariot,
and his son and his army.
The kings you defeated
are now on your side.

19 Your fame and their strength,
with Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Arjuna assisting,
without any trouble
could have routed the forces
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

20 But what is the point,
after years of exile,
your enemies grown strong,
your own strength uncertain –
what now is the point
of waging a war?

21 A man of adharma
or an ignorant man
may win on the field,
while a man of dharma
or a man of wisdom
may lose the battle.

22 Your nature prevents you
from doing adharma;
though angered, son of Kuntī,
you cannot be wicked.
Why then are you bent
on waging this war?

23 Anger's no cure:
its fruit is corruption,
its root confusion.
Good men control it,
bad man indulge it.
Control it, mahārāja!

24 Anger can only
succeed in degrading.
Cultivate serenity,
instead of desiring
the deaths of Aśvatthāman
and Droṇa and Bhīṣma.

25 Tell me, Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
what joy will you get
after you have killed
Kṛpa, Śalya, Bhūsiśravas,
Viviṁśati, Vikarṇa,
Duryodhana and Karṇa?

26 The sea-girdled earth
will be in your hands,
but death and decay
and pleasure and pain
will still afflict you.
O do not fight!

27 If advisers are adamant,
dismiss them, and tell them
to fight their own war.
Do not abandon today
the path you have chosen
that leads to the gods."

## SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT

1 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Certainly, Sañjaya,
dharma is best.
Make certain, however,
if what I follow
is dharma or adharma.

2 Adharma puts on
the appearance of dharma,
and dharma adharma;
but dharma can also
appear as dharma.
The wise know the difference.

3 Normally one follows
the dharma or adharma
ordained by one's nature.
In periods of crisis,
the standard of conduct
depends on the state
of adharma and dharma.
Let me explain, Sañjaya,
how dharma can change.

4 If a man has no means
of earning a living,
he takes other dharmas
than those of his nature;
otherwise Sañjaya, no –
since there is no crisis.

5 The Creator has sanctioned
redemption for Brahmins
who act out of caste
but expiate their misdeed.
Other castes also
are granted this choice.
The usual in normal,
the exceptional in crisis,
should not be condemned.

6 When fulfilment is sought,
the values of the learned
are practised; however,
non-Brahmins who do not
practise such values
need not be condemned.

7 This is the path
our fathers and grandfathers
have followed – and others too,
considered as wise,
but given to action.
I cannot defy them.

8 I will not employ
adharma, Sañjaya,
to gather the treasures
of heaven, of earth,
of the worlds of Brahmā
and the Prajāpatis.

9 The lord of dharma
is Krishna, proficient
in all arts and sciences;
prudent, wise, mahā-powerful,
he is attended by Brahmins,
he is a teacher of kings.

10 Let Krishna decide
if I am wrong,
if I have rejected peace,
forsaken sva-dharma;
mahā-famed Keśava-Vāsudeva
seeks the good of both parties.

11 Sātyaki and Cedi,
Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis,
Bhojas, Kukuras, Sṛñjayas
follow Vāsudeva-Krishna:
they kill their enemies
and delight their friends.

12 The Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas,
and Ugrasena and others,
headed by Krishna,
equal Indra himself;
the Yādavas are truthful, resourceful,
proud of their mahā-power.

13 The ruler of Kāśi, Babhru,
has boon-granting Vāsudeva-
Krishna for brother; he prospers:
on his head fall blessings
as lavish as rains
when summer is over.

14 Glorious is Keśava-Krishna!
Consider him the final
arbiter of ethics.
Illustrious Keśava-Krishna
is also our friend,
I cannot ignore him."

SECTION TWENTY-NINE

1 Vāsudeva-Krishna said:
"I stand for the good
of the Pāṇḍavas, Sañjaya! –
and I stand for the good
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
and his numerous sons.

2 I wanted to tell them:
'Seek peace'; nothing else.
I am told this is also
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's desire.
I am sure this will lead
to the good of the Pāṇḍavas.

3 Yudhiṣṭhira, indeed, Sañjaya,
has revealed exceptional
restraint; Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and his sons have shown
excessive possessiveness,
leading to friction.

4 Sañjaya, you cannot
know deeper in dharma
than I or Yudhiṣṭhira.
So why seek to blame
him who is always
aware of what he does,

5 Who has always subscribed
to the family values
ordained by tradition?
The opinions of Brahmins
regarding this point
will considerably differ.

6 Some say perfection
comes only through karma;
others say through knowledge.
Not knowing about food,
but eating, fills stomachs –
is the wisdom of Brahmins.

7 Only knowledge that leads
to karma, bears fruits.
The proof is simple:
the pangs of thirst
are quenched, Sañjaya,
by the drinking of water.

8 It is karma that always
leads to more karma;
it produces results, Sañjaya.
It is only the fool
or a weakling who values
anything other than karma.

9 It is karma that gives
the gods their splendour,
The wind blows karma.
The unsleeping sun
rises through karma
and makes night and day.

10 The unsleeping moon
makes half-months and months
and other divisions
through karma alone;
the unsleeping Jātaveda-fire
does good through karma.

11 The devī of earth
unsleeping endures
her burden through karma;
the unsleeping waters
of rivers bring riches
through unceasing karma.

12 Unsleeping Bala-slaying Indra
sends rain on the earth
and her cardinal directions;
he does without sleep
by the strength he attained
through intense brahmacarya.

13 Abandoing pleasures
Śakra-Indra attained
lordship through karma,
with dharma and truth,
restraint and endurance,
fairness and friendship.

14 And so he became
the rājā of the gods.
Bṛhaspati also
practised brahmacarya,
subduing his senses,
controlling his ātman.

15 Abandoning pleasures,
restraining his senses,
he gathered homage
from the gods; he shines
like the planets and Rudra,
Āditya and the Vasus.

16 Rājā Yama, Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera,
celestial ṛṣis, the yakṣas,
O Sūta Sañjaya,
apsarās, gandharvas,
shine through brahmacarya,
resplendent with karma.

17 Yudhiṣṭhira is firm
in the Vedas and also
the Aśvamedha and Rājasūya –
a hero in chariot,
on horse and elephant,
with bow and in armour.

19 If the Pāṇḍavas knew
of a way to prevent
the massacre of the Kauravas,
they would adopt it,
and persuade Bhīma
to follow that dharma.

20 If, following the path
of their fathers, they perish,
that being their fate,
they would die in the course
of doing their karma,
and merit high praise.

21 If you really desire
the making of peace,
then answer me this:
The dharma of a rājā –
does it lie in fighting
or avoidance of fighting?

22 Consider, O Sañjaya,
the fourfold divisions,
the dharma of each.
And then, examine
the plan of the Pāṇḍavas
for praise or for blame.

23 For a Brahmin: study,
performance of yajñas,
visiting *tīrthas*,
teaching, being priest,
accepting donations
from persons of honour.

24 For a Kṣatriya also,
performance of yajñas;
offering of gifts;
he cannot however
officiate as priest.
Such is Kṣatriya-dharma.

25 Protecting his kingdom
and subjects, and offering
donations and gifts,
and studying the Vedas,
and marrying, are duties
of Kṣatriya-dharma.

26 A dharmātmā man,
doing deeds of dharma,
wanders at will
in the region of Brahmā.
A Vaiśya tills soil,
keeps cattle, does business.

27 Serving Brahmins and Kṣatriyas
in his role as householder,
he follows his dharma.
A Śūdra serves Brahmins;
forbidden to him
are yajñas and scriptures.
He is wakeful and helpful.
This is his dharma
ordained from the past.

28 The rājā is sovereign –
his dharma involves
protecting the castes,
dispensing justice,
and careful avoidance
of the passions of kāma.

29 If the king should discover
a person superior
and versed in all dharmas,
let him advise
his subjects to serve him
and improve themselves.

30 When enemies covet
the wealth of others,
delighting in cruelty
and using their strength
with weapons designed
for the conduct of war,

31 He turns to the bow
designed by Indra
to ward off robbers.

32 Killing a robber
is a virtuous act.
The Kauravas are robbers.
They are clever in adharma,
and foolish in dharma.
And this is not good, Sañjaya.

33 Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his sons
misappropriated
the Pāṇḍavas' rights,
and violated the age-old
dharma of rājās –
and the Kauravas applauded!

34 Robbing by stealth,
and robbing by force –
what is the difference?
A thief is a thief, Sañjaya.
How is the son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra different?

35 Confused by his greed,
he considers as dharma
the dictates of his passion.
Why does he deny
the rights of the Pāṇḍavas,
acknowledged by all?

36 It is better we die
in an effort to recover
ancestral inheritance
than seek others' wealth.
Clarify this dharma
to the gathering of Kauravas,

37 To the fools invited
by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
for his own doom.
Reflect for a moment
on their shameful behaviour
in the Kaurava sabhā,

38 When Bhīṣma sat silent,
and the Kauravas sat silent,
while Draupadī, lady
of purity, loved wife
of the Pāṇḍavas, in her period
suffered their kāma.

39 If the older and younger
Kauravas present
had tried to prevent this,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
would have benefited,
and I too been pleased.

40 Duḥśāsana dragged Kṛṣṇā-
Draupadī before
her fathers-in-law.
She pleaded for help,
and none rose to help her,
excepting Vidura.

41 The kings in the sabhā
kept stupidly silent.
Only Kṣattā-Vidura spoke
his words of dharma,
on Draupadī's behalf,
to dimwitted Duryodhana.

42 You were there in the sabhā,
yet you kept silent.
And now you preach dharma
to us today!
The exemplary behaviour
was Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's not yours.

43 She rescued the Pāṇḍavas
and herself out of shame
like a sailor piloting
a ship out of storm.
The charioteer's son Karṇa
reviled her in the sabhā:

44 'You are helpless, Yājñasenī-Draupadī,
you are slave to Duryodhana.
Your husbands, defeated,
are no more your husbands.
O beautiful lady,
find another husband.'

45 It was sharp; it was bitter;
it burned through the flesh –
this arrow of Karṇa's –
and lodged in the heart
of dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Phālguna-Arjuna.

46 When the Pāṇḍavas departed,
dressed in black deerskin,
Duḥśāsana addressed
this cruel farewell:
'These sesame-seed eunuchs
are going to hell.'

47 The Gāndhāra rājā Śakuni
was also amused;
he said to Yudhiṣṭhira
during the dice-game;
'Your brothers you have lost –
stake Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.'

48 You surely remember,
Sañjaya, the insults
they mouthed at the dice-game.
But now I am firm.
I will meet them and settle
this once and for all.

49 If peace can be had
with Pāṇḍava honour,
well and good!
Success will lead also
to freeing the Kauravas
from the noose of death.

50 I hope that the Kauravas
will listen to my message
of dharma-and-artha
and peace; I hope
the Kauravas receive me
with pūjā-respect.

51 For otherwise, Sañjaya,
be sure that the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra are doomed
to destruction at the hands
of Phālguna-Arjuna
and valiant Bhīma.

52 After winning the dice-game,
they insulted us Pāṇḍavas.
When the time is ripe,
the turn will be Bhīma's,
armed with his mace,
to remind Duryodhana.

53 Suyodhana-Duryodhana's
a mahā-tree of pride,
Karṇa's the trunk,
Śakuni the branches,
Duḥśāsana the fruits and flowers,
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra the root.

54 Yudhiṣṭhira's a mahā-tree
symbolic of dharma;
Arjuna's the trunk,
and Bhīma the branches,
the twin sons of Mādrī
its flowers and fruits.
And Brahmā and I
and Brahmins comprise
the roots of this tree.

55 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and his sons are the forest;
the Pāṇḍavas, O Sañjaya,
are lions in that forest.
No forest without lions,
no lions without forest.

56 Without forest the tigers
are easy to hunt down;
without tigers the forest
is easily cut down.
The forest needs tigers,
the tigers the forest.

57 The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
are creepers of dharma;
the Pāṇḍavas, O Sañjaya,
are like *śāla*-trees.
The creepers depend
on the trees for survival.

58 The foe-destroying Pāṇḍavas
are prepared for peace,
the Kauravas are poised for war.
Let Dhṛtarāṣṭra make the next move.

59 The mahātmā, dharma-cultivating sons
of Pāṇḍu
are powerful but peace-loving.
Convey this to Dhṛtarāṣṭra."

## SECTION THIRTY

1 And Sanjaya replied:
"O Pāṇḍavas, I leave
and I wish you success.
I trust that my words
were not interpreted
as rude or condescending.

2 I take leave of Janārdana-
Krishna, Bhīma, Arjuna,
the twin sons of Mādri,
Sātyaki, Cekitana.
May all prosper, O kings!
May we all be friends."

3 Yudhiṣṭhira said, "Sañjaya,
go, and remember us
without any ill-will.
They know and we know
your ātman is pure
when you speak in the sabhā.

4 Your speech has been peace-based,
your conduct gentle,
and pleasing to us, Sañjaya.
Your words have been blunt
but untouched by malice.
You have meant us well.

5 Never rude, never harsh,
never bitter, or false,
your words, O Sañjaya,
were inspired by dharma
and practical wisdom,
never by ill-will, O Sūta.

6 We think of you dearly.
The other envoy
we admire is Vidura.
We knew you before;
you are our friend, as close
as Dhanañjaya Arjuna.

7

When you leave us, Sañjaya,
attend on the Brahmins
of purest devotion,
of the finest families,
Brahmins well-versed
in all the known dharmas;

8

Go also to Brahmins
devoted to study,
who subsist on alms,
and live in the forest.
Present my regards,
specially to the elders.

9

Seek, *tāta*, dear one,
the *purohita* of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and all his ācāryas
and *ṛtviks*, and give them
my regards, O Sūta,
and concern for their health.

10

With graceful deportment
offer my *añjali*
and humble namaskāra
to the low-born, if old
or cultured or valiant,
who keep us in mind,

11

And steadily follow
the pattern of dharma,
and present my regards.
Inquire of their health,
and say we are well.
In addition, *tāta*, dear one,

12

Go also to those
in trade and commerce
and state administration
and to those engaged
in the tilling of soil,
and enquire of their health.

13 Ācārya Droṇa
is a brahmacārī who knows
the fourfold morality –
mantra, *upacāra,*
*prayoga, saṁhara.*
He is absolute expert
in the science of weapons.
He looks on us kindly.
Give him our regards

14 Aśvatthāman also
has steadfastly practised
the fourfold morality.
He is a master of weapons,
strong as a gandharva.
Enquire of his health.

15 Proceed to the mahā-chariot-hero
Śāradvata-Kṛpa,
wise in the ātman.
Repeatedly touch
his feet, Sañjaya,
on the Pāṇḍavas' behalf.

16 Touch also the feet
of Bhīṣma, the finest
of the Kauravas, heroic
and humble and patient,
devoted and noble,
steeped in *śruti*-wisdom.

17 The elderly rājā
who has inseeing eyes,
the king of the Kauravas,
the shelter of those
who are old and wise,
tell him we are well.

18 *Tāta*, dear Sañjaya,
about Suyodhana Duryodhana,
the Kauravas' eldest,
wicked and foolish and rascally,
who now rules the world –
ask about his health.

19 Remember us, *tāta* Sañjaya,
to Duḥśāsana, younger
to Duryodhana, but no
less foolish, renowned
mahā-archer, and honoured
as Kaurava hero.

20 Present our regards, Sañjaya,
to the Bāhlīka chief,
who is honest and wise,
whose only concern
is that peace should unite
the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas.

21 I think Somadatta
should be pūjā-respected;
he is wise and compassionate,
and tolerantly endures
the passionate displays
of all around him.

22 The noblest, of course,
is Somadatta's son,
whom I love dearly, Sañjaya:
he is both mahā-archer
and chariot-hero.
Ask about his welfare.

23 Remember us also
to the young Kauravas –
sons, grandsons, and cousins –
and use your discretion
in offering appropriate
respect to each.

24 The rājās assembled
by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
to fight the Pāṇḍavas –
the Vaśātis and Śālvas,
the Kekayas and Ambaṣṭhas,
the Trigarta heroes,

25 The chiefs of the east,
the north, the south,
and the west, and the chiefs
from the mountains – present
my regards to whoever
are noble and cultured.

26 Remember us also
to the heroes on elephants
and chariots and horses,
and warriors who fight
on foot – a mighty,
magnificent host.

27 The rājā's treasurers,
the door-guards, the captains,
the collectors of revenue,
the expense-calculators,
the advisers – present
our regards to them all.

28 Enquire of the health
of Yuyutsu, the mahā-wise son
of king Dhṛtarāṣṭra
by a Vaiśyā woman –
he is all-dharma-knowing;
*tāta*, dear one, he abhors war.

29 Ask the health also
of Citrasena, expert
in cheating at dice
without being detected,
so clever that none
can defeat him at dice.

30 Enquire about the health
of Śakuni, the rājā
of Gāndhāra, second to none
in cheating. *Tāta*, dear Sūta,
he is skilled in the art
of flattering Duryodhana.

31 Ask the health also
of Vaikartana Karṇa, who hopes
to defeat the invincible
Pāṇḍava heroes.
He is without rival
in fooling the fools.

32 Our *bhakta,* our guru,
our guardian, our father
and mother and friend –
far-seeing Vidura,
our adviser – enquire
about his health also.

33 The elderly guṇa-rich ladies
we respect as our mothers,
when they are together, –
give them, O Sañjaya,
our deepest reverence
and say we are well,

34 And ask, 'You have sons living.
Are you honoured by them?'
Say this, O Sañjaya,
and add that Yudhiṣṭhira,
who has no enemies,
and his sons are well.

35 And the wives whom we honour
as we do our own wife,
ask them as follows:
'Are you happy, protected?
Is your virtue still fragrant,
your conduct respected?

36 Are you gentle and loving
to your fathers-in-law?
Gracious, fortunate ladies,
behave in a manner
that earns you the praise
and love of your husbands.'

37 Go also, Sañjaya,
to our daughters-in-law,
who come from the noblest
families, and have
all the virtues, and say
Yudhiṣṭhira sends greetings.

38 Embrace the young girls
of the house, and bless them, Sañjaya:
'O fortunate ones,
may your husbands admire you,
and may you in turn
admire your husbands.'

39 Remember, *tāta,* dear one,
the fashionable courtesans
expensively dressed,
scented and ornamented,
elegant and happy and fearless,
sweet-looking and sweet-speaking.

40 The servants and maids,
and the lame and the hunchbacked
looked after by them –
give them my greetings,
enquire of their health,
and ask them from me:

41 'Does Duryodhana, the son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, provide
for your old-age pension?
Are the maimed and the dwarfs
and the weak-minded too
maintained by him?'

42 The blind and decrepit,
the legless and others
of Hastināpura –
inform them Yudhiṣṭhira
is well, and remember
to ask of their health.

43 And tell them: 'No use
bemoaning your lot –
these miseries are caused
by your past misdeeds.
Yudhiṣṭhira will come
and provide you with comfort.'

44 Enquire of Duryodhana
if the pensions I granted
to Brahmins are honoured.
For I am determined
to meet their needs
and give them rewards.

45 Remember me also
to the weak, the helpless, and foolish,
with none to protect them,
struggling for livelihood,
and do not forget, *tāta*, dear one,
the unlettered and ignorant.

46 And those who have come
in the hope of finding
refuge with Duryodhana
from all parts of the earth –
remember, Sūta's son,
to go to them also.

47 The ambassadors who adorn
the court of the rājā
of Hastināpura
from different countries –
greet them, and tell them, Sūta,
Yudhiṣṭhira is well.

48 No warrior excels
the heroes who now
have joined Duryodhana.
But dharma's eternal,
and dharma's my mahā-strength
for destroying my enemies.

49 To Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, go,
and tell him, Sañjaya:
'The ambition tormenting
your heart – to be king
without rival – is futile.

50 It is all so pointless.
Nothing we do pleases you.
But the choice is clear:
Return Śakrapurī-Indraprastha,
or face, O brave Bharata,
the prospect of war.'

## SECTION THIRTY-ONE

1 Yudhiṣṭhira added, "Sañjaya,
the Creator controls
good and bad, young and old,
weak and strong.

2 The Lord of all makes a paṇḍit
of a child,
and a fool of a paṇḍit,
according to the scheme of things.

3 Having openly discussed with us
to arrive at the facts,
go and tell curious Dhṛtarāṣṭra
how things are.

4 Go, Gāvalgaṇa-Sañjaya,
to the mahā-powerful Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra
touch his feet and enquire
about his health,

5 And tell him, in the presence
of the Kauravas: 'O rājā!
The Pāṇḍavas are living happily
under your auspices.

6 Your bounty gave them a kingdom
when they were boys.
Re-possess them, do not ignore them,
do not ruin them.'

7 One man, O Sañjaya, alone will find
this kingdom too burdensome.
So tell him for us: 'Let us unite,
or our foes will overcome us.'

8 On my behalf, bow your head
before our mighty grandfather Bhīṣma,
son of Śāntanu
of the Bharatas.

9 After honouring him, tell him:
'Your intervention
saved the race of Śāntanu
from impending extinction.

10 You intervened once.
Intervene now, O *tāta*, dear grandfather,
and convince your grandsons
to live in peace together.'

11 Go also to Vidura, adviser of the Kauravas;
praise him:
'Serene one! You who abhor war,
you who wish Yudhiṣṭhira's welfare!'

12 Go to haughty Duryodhana
when he is sitting among the Kauravas,
entreat him
again and again:

13 'The outrage against blameless Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
dragged in the sabhā –
we quietly suffered that insult,
to prevent a massacre of the Kurus.

14 The Kauravas know how many similar insults
the Pāṇḍavas endured
earlier and later,
though they could have retaliated.

15 Saumya! O fair-minded one! You forced us
to wear deerskin and go into exile.
This shame we endured to prevent
a massacre of the Kauravas.

16 You allowed Duḥśāsana to drag
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī by her hair
despite the protests of Kuntī.
This too we will overlook.

17 But we are firm in wanting our ancestral inheritance.
O foe-destroyer!
O bull-brave mortal!
Do not covet the wealth of others.

18 Only this can lead to peace and friendship
between us, O rājā.
Return us one province of our kingdom.
We seek peace.

19 Return Avisthala, Vṛkasthala, Mākandī
and Vāraṇāvata,
and one other village – only these five.
Let quarrels end.

20 Suyodhana-Duryodhana, let your five cousin-brothers
have five villages.' O mahā-wise Sañjaya!
Let there be peace between Duryodhana
and his cousins.

21 Let brother embrace brother,
and father embrace son.
Let the Pāñcālas and the Kauravas
smile and unite.

22 O bull-brave Bharata! I wish to see
the Kauravas and Pāñcālas happily
living at peace with each other,
with no acrimony.

23 I am anxious for peace, Sañjaya,
and I am ready for war.
For dharma-and-artha
I can be both kind and cruel."

## SECTION THIRTY-TWO

1 The words of dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
inspired Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
to say to Sañjaya
in the presence of Vāsudeva-Krishna:

2 "Sañjaya, Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma and Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Droṇa, his son, mahārāja Śalya, Bāhlīka,

3 Vikarṇa, Somadatta, Subala's son Śakuni,
Viviṁśati, Citrasena, Jayatsena,
Bhagadatta, and other great war-heroes,

4 The rājās and rulers
who all have gathered
geared for battle:
and the chiefs whom Duryodhana
has summoned from Sindhu
to be on his side –

5 Approach them for me
and give my regards
and say I am well;
and go to Duryodhana,
expert in misdeeds,
and tell him the same."

6 With these words, celebrating
artha and-dharma,
delighting the Pāṇḍavas
and frightening the Kauravas,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna allowed
Sañjaya to leave.

7 Sañjaya respectfully said to Arjuna,
"I will do so."
He took leave from Kuntī's sons
and Keśava-Krishna.

8 Sañjaya, with Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira's permission
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
left, having conveyed the message
of mahātmā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

9 He speedily entered Hastināpura.
At the entrance
of the palace's inner apartments,
he said to the gate-keeper:

10 "Inform Dhṛtarāṣṭra immediately
that Sañjaya has returned
after meeting the sons of Pāṇḍu.
And hurry!

11 If he is awake,
advise him of this,
I will wait at the gate.
My news is important."
The gate-keeper quickly
went to the king.

12 "O lord of the earth,
I offer my namaskāra.
At the door is Sañjaya,
waiting for audience, O rājā.
He has come from the Pāṇḍavas,
and awaits your orders."

13 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
"Allow him to enter.
Sañjaya is welcome.
Why should he wait?
He knows he can enter
any time he likes."

14 With the monarch's permission
Sañjaya offered *prāñjali*
in the hall where the king
sat on his throne,
surrounded by heroes,
and wise men, and courtiers.

15 "I am Sañjaya, I offer
namaskāra to the king.
I bring from the Pāṇḍavas,
specially Yudhiṣṭhira,
his greetings; he enquires
after the health of your majesty.

16 He affectionately enquires
of the health of your sons,
and wishes to know, O rājā:
Are you pleased with your sons
and your grandsons, and friends,
and dependents and courtiers?"

17 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "*Tāta*, dear Sañjaya,
you are welcome.
Is foe-less Yudhiṣṭhira,
the Kaurava rājā,
his sons and his brothers, –
are they all well?"

18 "Indeed, they are well,"
Sañjaya replied.
"The learned and noble
resourceful follower
of dharma-and-artha Yudhiṣṭhira
desires what is his.

19 No dharma is greater,
he says, than non-injury.
No wealth is greater
than dharma, he says,
for dharma alone, O Bharata,
brings perfect pleasure.

20 A superior power
manipulates man
like a doll on a string.
Yudhiṣṭhira's ordeals
convince me that fate
determines man's karma.

21 When I witness your deeds
so inhuman that words
cannot describe them,
I know they are praised
only so long
as your adversary is weak.

22 Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
has shed imperfection
like a snake shedding skin.
He shines in his freedom;
his load of defects
has fallen on you.

23 O rājā, O slayer
of your ātman, your karma
goes counter to dharma-
and-artha, so blame, O rājā,
will be yours in this world,
and pain in the next.

24 You humour your son,
in the hope of attaining
impossible wealth,
to enjoy without sharing.
But this is adharma –
mahā-unworthy of you.

25 Destruction is certain
for the lowborn, the cruel,
the unwise, the hate-filled,
the Kṣatriya who knowingly
abandons his valour,
and follows adharma.

26 Good fortune decides
who is famous and learned,
who is highborn and happy,
who disciplines his ātman,
and knows how adharma
and dharma are linked.

27 A well-advised man,
who is learned and knows
what's dharma and artha –
why should he ever
indulge in cruel
and unthinking karma?

28

Your courtiers faithfully
seek to advise you;
they work as a unit.
Their decision invites
the shadow of doom
on the Kaurava race.

29

If Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
wishes you ill,
the Kauravas are doomed.
His load of misdeeds
will transfer to you;
the blame will be yours.

30

Is it not wonderful
that Arjuna is honoured
in the world beyond this?
He roams without fear
in this world and that –
a superhuman feat!

31

When rājā Bali,
realising that virtue
depended on karma,
and progress and poverty
were transient, he knew
that the cause was Kāla.

32

Our cravings develop
through eye, ear and nose,
and touch and tongue.
When desire is destroyed,
these senses are stilled.
Be calm and control them.

33

But others suggest
right karma's the cause
of successful results.
The karma of father
and mother's the baby,
who, fed, will surely grow.

34

Unpleasant and pleasant,
sorrow and joy,
censure and honour –
such is life, O rājā.
For a good act, praise;
for a bad act, blame.

35

And I blame you,
for war will consume
all the Kauravas
like Kṛṣnavarta-Agni,
the all-blackening fire.
The fault will be yours.

36

O Indra-among-men! O rājā!
You fell for the whims
of kāma-obsessed
Duryodhana, and failed
to prevent this dispute.
And see the result!

37

O Kaurava rājā, your weakness
will lose you your kingdom.
O Indra-among-men!
Your courtiers have tricked you,
and you have rejected
the advice of the honest.

38

O lion-among-men! I am tired.
The journey by chariot
was long. Let me rest.
In the morning the Kauravas
will hear in the sabhā
the terms of Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira."

39

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Go,
and rest, O Sūta's son.
In the morning the Kauravas
will hear in the sabhā
the terms of Yudhiṣṭhira,
the foe-less hero."

SECTION THIRTY-THREE

1 The mahā-wise ruler Dhṛtarāṣṭra said
to his door attendant:
"I wish to meet Vidura,
Bring him here immediately."

2 Acting on Dhṛtarāṣṭra's order,
the attendant said to Kṣattā-Vidura:
"O mahā-wise one,
the mahārāja has summoned you."

3 Vidura hurried to the palace.
He approached the gate-keeper
and said :
"Announce me to Dhṛtarāṣṭra."

4 The gate-keeper said:
"O Indra-among-rājās!
Vidura desires a darshan of your feet.
Instruct me, your majesty."

5 "Let mahā-wise far-seeing Vidura
be allowed in,"
ordered Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
"I am always ready for his darshan."

6 "Kṣattā-Vidura, you may enter
the wise mahārāja's inner apartment,"
said the gate-keeper. "The rājā says
your darshan is always welcome."

7 Vidura entered Dhṛtarāṣṭra's palace
and did *añjali*
before the lord of men
who was lost in thought.

8 "O mahā-wise monarch!
I am Vidura,
here because you summoned me.
Command me to serve you."

9 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Wise Sañjaya was here, Vidura.
He left after criticising me.
Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira's terms
will be placed in the sabhā.

10 I was not told what the terms
of Yudhiṣṭhira were,
for which reason I am restless
and deeply worried.

11 Tell me what is good for a man
whose body burns
and who cannot sleep.
*Tāta* Vidura, you know dharma-and-artha.

12 After Sañjaya returned
with the Pāṇḍavas' terms,
my peace is disturbed;
all my senses appear
to be in confusion
about his proposals."

13 Vidura replied: "Sleeplessness afflicts
one who is threatened
by a stronger rival, one who's weak,
whose efforts have failed,
who has lost wealth, who is kāma-stricken,
or who's a thief.

14 Lord of men, I hope none of these
is the cause of your sleeplessness,
nor any hankering
for the wealth of others."

15 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Speak to me
supreme words of dharma.
Of rājā-ṛṣis you are the only one
honoured by the wise."

16 Vidura replied:
"Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira has all the auspicious marks,
and is worthy of three-worlds-lordship.
Yet you exiled him.

17 You are a dharmātmā,
you know what is dharma,
but your blindness prevented you
from giving him his share.

18 His desire for non-injury, kindness,
dharma, truth and honour
makes him acknowledge your greatness
and accept countless hardships.

19 How can you hope for success
after handing over power
to undeserving Duryodhana, Saubala-Śakuni,
Karṇa and Duḥśāsana?

20 The paṇḍit is the self-knower
who never strays from noble goals,
because he employs effort, patience,
and unswerving dharma.

21 The paṇḍit is he who emulates
the praiseworthy
and shuns the blameworthy;
he has faith, he has optimism.

22 The paṇḍit is he who is unmotivated
by joy, anger,
pride, shame, false humility and self-importance.
He believes in work.

23 The paṇḍit is he who never reveals
his course of action to others
until the work
has been satisfactorily completed.

24 The paṇḍit is he
whose action are never disturbed
by heat or cold, fear or passion,
success or failure.

25 The paṇḍit is he who wisely follows
dharma-and-artha,
who eschews kāma for the completion
of his goals.

26 The paṇḍits are those
who strive with full śakti,
and achieve with full śakti;
they consider nothing unimportant.

27 The paṇḍit is he
who listens with patience
and understands quickly,
exerts without kama,
and unasked will never
mind others' business.

28 The paṇḍit is he who discards
the unattainable aim,
does not mourn what is lost,
and remains cool in crisis.

29 The paṇḍit is he
who disciplines his ātman,
plans before acting, never gives up midway,
and never wastes time.

30 The paṇḍit are those who rejoice in good deeds,
O bull-brave Bharata,
who work for prosperity,
and never find fault with the good.

31 The paṇḍit is he whose heart remains calm
whether he's honoured or reviled–
as unruffled
as the waters of the Gaṅgā.

32 The paṇḍit is he who has insight
into life's meaning,
into karma's operations, into the psychology
of human beings.

33 The paṇḍit is he who speaks openly,
argues skilfully on various subjects,
and quickly clarifies
what's written in books.

34 He becomes known as a paṇḍit
whose learning shows wisdom,
and whose wisdom shows learning,
and who respects goodness in men.

35 Wise men describe as fools
the unlearned yet proud,
the poor yet conceited,
and the seekers of prosperity through ill-deeds.

36 He is a fool who neglects himself
and minds others' interests,
and behaves falsely
with his own friends.

37 He is foolish-minded who has kāma
for what one should not have kāma,
who rejects
what one should have kāma for,
and who treats disrespectfully
those superior to him.

38 He is foolish-minded
who is friendly with foes,
and hates and ruins his well-wishers
with wicked deeds.

39 He is a fool who leaks out his plans,
O bull-brave Bharata,
who doubts everything,
who delays in emergency.

40 He is foolish-minded
who refuses *śrāddha* to *pitṛs*,
who does not honour the gods,
who has no good friends.

41 That fool is the worst
who enters uninvited,
is unwantedly garrulous,
and trusts the untrustworthy.

42 That fool is the worst
who always blames others
though the fault is his,
and who rages in frustration.

43 He is foolish-minded who miscalculates
resources and goals,
even if he succeeds,
he gains no dharma-and-artha.

44 O rājā! He is foolish-minded
who teaches the unteachable,
honours the fake and the shallow,
and seeks help from misers.

45 The paṇḍit is he who,
though he acquire mahā-riches,
learning and power,
behaves without any show of pride.

46 Who is more callous than the man
with great wealth
who eats and dresses well without sharing
his good fortune with the deserving?

47 One man commits the crime –
hundreds of others enjoy its fruits,
They escape punishment,
he pays the price.

48 When an archer shoots an arrow,
he kills one, or he misses.
But royal cleverness misapplied
ruins both rājā and subjects.

49 Use *one* (the mind) to find *two*
(right and wrong);
control *three* (friend, enemy, and neutral)
with help from *four*
(placation, gift, subterfuge,
and punishment);
discipline the *five* senses,
*and know the* six
(treaty and war, hunger and thirst,
aging and death);
stay away from the *seven*
(women, gambling, hunting,
liquor, cruel speech, injustice, ill-won wealth),
and prosper.

50 Poison kills one,
most weapons kill one,
but counsellors quarrelling
ruin rājā and subjects.

51 Alone do not eat delicious food,
alone do not work
for high profit,
alone do not go on journeys,
alone do not wake
when others are asleep.

52 The only way to heaven is truth.
It is the only boat
across the ocean.
Rājā, this you do not know.

53 There is only one defect in persons
who are patient –
patient people are thought
to be incompetent.

54 Do not attach importance to this.
Patience is awesome.
It ornaments the weak
and also the strong.

55 Patience rules the world.
What is there beyond *kṣamā* patience?
How can a scoundrel harm a man
who wields the sword of peace?

56 Fire falling on grassless soil
extinguishes itself.
The impatient person works out
his own ruin.

57 There is only one supreme refuge – dharma.
Only one peace – patience.
One satisfaction – knowledge.
One joy – ahiṁsā.

58 There are two worthless types
in this sea-girt earth –
the inactive householder,
and the worldly renouncer.

59 Like a snake devouring hole-dwellers,
the earth devours
a war-fearing rājā
and a Brahmin who never leaves home.

60 Two kinds of attitudes
bring a man renown –
restraint in speech,
and disregard of the dishonest.

61 O tiger-among-men!
Two types repose trust in others:
women who have kāma for men
whom other women desire,
and men who offer pūjā-respect to men
whom others offer pūjā-respect.

62 These two thorns pierce the flesh –
the poor man's kāma,
and the helpless man's
anger.

63 These two never prosper
because their actions are inconsistent:
the lazy householder,
the ever-busy beggar.

64 These two men are higher even
than heaven, O rājā:
the overly lenient lord,
the generous poor man.

65 These two are violations
of honestly-earned wealth:
gifts to the undeserving,
refusal to the deserving.

66 These two deserve drowning with stones
round their necks:
the rich who don't give gifts,
the poor who can't endure hardship.

67 O tiger-among-men!
These two penetrate the *maṇḍala* of the sun:
the unwavering yogi,
and the soldier slain in battle.

68 There are three ways to success,
O bull-brave Bharata;
the Veda-wise describe them as bad,
in-between, and good.

69 There are three types of humans, O rājā:
bad, in-between, and good.
Each should practise
appropriate karma.

70 O rājā! These three possess no wealth –
wife, slave, son.
What they earn belongs to whom
they belong.

71 Three defects are dreadfully destructive:
stealing others' wealth,
loving others' wives,
betraying one's friends.

72 Kāma, anger greed –
the gates to hell are three.
These destroy the ātman.
They should be sublimated.

73 O Bharata descendant! These three deeds equal
the freeing of an enemy:
granting a boon, gaining a kingdom,
fathering a son.

74 These three should not be turned away,
even in extreme danger to oneself:
one who comes to one's houst to serve,
a devoted *bhakta*,
and one who says, seeking protection,
'I am yours.'

75 Learned paṇḍits advise
these four be shunned
by a mahā-powerful rājā:
the lazy, the flatterers,
men of small minds,
and procrastinators.

76 *Tātā*! Gṛahastha-dharma says:
Welcome these four
to your prosperous home:
old and feeble relatives,
adversity stricken noblemen, poor friends,
a childless sister.

77 Mahārāja, when Indra questioned Bṛhaspati
regarding what bears instant fruit,
his reply was –
listen closely:

78 The will of the gods,
the insight of the wise,
the humility of the learned,
the ruin of the wicked.

79 These four fear-removers bring fear
if done imperfectly:
*agnihotr̥*, vow of silence, study,
and yajña.

80 O bull-brave Bharata! Worship five fires
with great care:
father, mother, Agni, ātman,
and one's guru.

81 Pūjā-reverence of the following five
brings renown in this world:
gods, *pitṛs*, humans, mendicants,
and guests.

82 The following five will follow you
wherever you go:
friends, enemies, neutrals, dependents,
and shelter-seekers.

83 Like water from a leaking pot,
intelligence spills out wastefully
from any defective sense
of a man's five senses.

84 Six weaknesses should be avoided
by the success-seeker:
sleep, drowsiness, fear, anger, sloth,
and procrastination.

85 Avoid the following six as you would
a wobbling boat on a sea:
an ācārya who cannot teach,
all illiterate *ṛtvik*-priest,

86 A rājā who cannot offer protection,
    a foul-mouthed wife,
a cowherd who lives in the village,
    a barber who lives in the forest.

87 These six guṇas should never be discarded
    by anyone:
truth, generosity, activity, absence of envy,
    forbearance, steadiness.

88 These six are sure to be happy, O rājā:
    the prosperous, the healthy,
the man with a soft-speaking wife,
    an obedient son,
the man who has friends,
    the man with profitable knowledge.

89 How can grief touch the sense-disciplined man
    who slays the six foes –
anger, kāma, greed, bewilderment,
    pride, and jealousy?

90 These six thrive on six counterparts,
    not on a seventh:
pilferers on the absent-minded,
    doctors on the diseased,

91 Prostitutes on the kāma-stricken,
    priests on sponsors of yajñas,
kings on quarrellers,
    wise men on the ignorant.

92 These six are lost
    even with the smallest neglect, O rājā:
cows, job, harvest, wife, knowledge,
    friendship with the low-minded.

93 These six forget the good
    that is done to them:
a clever pupil forgets his ācārya;
    married sons their mothers;

94 Men with kāma gratified, their women;
    those who have found success, their helplers;
river-crossers, their boatmen;
    healed patients, their doctors.

95 O rājā, these six
comprise human happiness:
non-disease, and non-debt,
non-exile, good friends,
a dependable job,
a life free from fear.

96 These six are doomed to suffer:
the envious, contemptuous,
discontented, angry, suspicious,
and livers-off-others.

97 A rājā should avoid
the seven weaknesses
that lead to the ruin
of even the greatest monarchs –

98 Women, gambling, hunting, drinking,
foul speaking –
these five – and unjust punishment,
and abuse of power.

99 The following eight are the cause
of the ruin of men:
hatred of Brahmins,
and struggle against Brahmins,

100 Dispossessing Brahmins,
and murder of Brahmins,
delight in mocking Brahmins,
disapproval of praising them,

101 Not remembering them on festivals,
criticising them
when they ask for help.
Wise men should overcome this.

102 The following eight represent
the essence of happiness
found in this world;
no material joy can be greater:

103 Reunion with loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friends,
acquisition of mahā-wealth,
embracing a son,
indulging in sexual intercourse,

104 Cordial conversation,
helping members of one's party,
accomplishing one's goals,
and receiving social esteem.

105 Eight guṇas, O rājā,
bring glory to man;
intelligence, noble birth,
restraint, *śruti*-knowledge, achievement,
soft-speaking, generosity according to capacity,
and gratitude.

106 This body-house has nine doors,
three pillars (*sattva, rajas, tamas),*
and five witnesses
(the subtle senses).
The man who knows the knower of this field
is the wisest of the wise.

107 These ten, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
have no idea of dharma:
the drunk, forgetful, insane, tired,
angry, hungry,

108 The greedy, the frightened, the hasty,
the kāma-stricken –
these ten. A paṇḍit should avoid
mixing with them.

109 In this connection one hears the old story
of what happened
when Sudhanvā met the anti-god chief
regarding the antigod's son.

110 The rājā who sheds
malice and kāma
and donates his wealth
is learned and active
and knows what is good.
All men respect him.

111

The man who is able
to win others' trust,
who punishes justly
and balances justice
with appropriate pardon,
soon finds prosperity.

112

The wise man is he
who thinks no foe weak,
however insignificant,
who waits for his chance,
and refuses to quarrel
with a formidable foe.

113

The mahātmā who patiently
endures misfortune,
and, keeping alert,
prepares for success,
will always find ways
of overcoming hardships.

114

That man is happy
who never leaves home
to profitlessly
mix with the wicked,
to get drunk and sleep
with another's wife,
to steal, and be arrogant,
and always indulge
in cheating and tricking.

115

Who never pursues
artha-dharma-and-kāma
with pride; who is truthful;
insulted, is not angry; –
such a man, indeed,
is the reverse of a fool.

116

He earns high renown
who never shows malice
to others; though weak,
does not quarrel; eschews
display of pride,
and practises forbearance.

117 Dear to all men
is the man never haughty,
who never slights others
while commending himself,
who even consciously
never speaks harshly.

118 Good men extol
a man who allows
old quarrels to die,
acts nobly in crisis,
and is neither vain
nor obsequious in conduct.

119 Good men extol
the man who refuses
to exult in his fame
or in the shame of another,
and never regrets
the charity he gives.

120 Greater than the great
is the man who has interest
in the customs and manners
of different lands,
in the dharmas of others,
no matter how strange.

121 Supreme among men
is the wise man who forsakes
treason, pride,
stupidity, insolence,
rascality, malice,
drunkenness and ill deed.

122 The gods will exalt
the person who daily
follows these practices:
respect for the gods,
charity and *homa*
and prescribed penances.

123 The practical man
gets related by marriage
to equal, not inferior;
his friends are his equals;
he is deeply respectful
to all his superiors.

124 In total control
and untouched by failure,
is the man who works hard
but eats in moderation,
who gives when requested
even to his foes.

125 Though trivial his task,
that man never fails
whose plans are not known
to others, whose motives
are secret, and diligently
put into practice.

126 A mahā diamond
from a mine of repute
is the doer of good,
the truthful and humble,
the never a miser.
His relatives respect him.

127 He shines like the sun,
his ātman is pure
who's ashamed of his faults
that are unknown to others;
he is revered as a guru
in all the worlds.

128 Five sons in the woods
were born to rājā Pāṇḍu
after his curse,
each equal to Indra;
they grew up in your care,
O Ambikā's son.

129 O *tātā*! Dear friend!
O Indra-among-men!
My advice is this:
Return them the kingdom
that is rightfully theirs;
be content with your sons,
and live your life happily.
Neither humans nor gods
will accuse you of wrong-doing."

## SECTION THIRTY-FOUR

1 "You are the only one here who knows
dharma-and-artha," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
"*Tāta*! Dear friend!
What should a sleepless man do?

2 Exercise your wisdom,
and tell me, O Vidura,
what you think promotes
the cause of Yudhiṣṭhira,
and guide me as well
concerning the Kauravas.

3 I have done wrong,
for which I now suffer.
In my anguish, O wise one,
tell me what you think
revolves in the mind
of Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira."

4 Vidura replied:
To prevent the ruin of a friend,
a man should give unasked advice,
good or bad, sweet or bitter.

5 I will tell you, O rājā,
what is good for the Kauravas.
Listen to me. My words contain dharma
and concern for you.

6 O Bharata descendant! Do not allow thoughts
to enter your mind
that involve the use of deceitful means
for disgraceful ends.

7 A man should not get
excessively distressed
if he finds that he cannot achieve his goal
through right karma.

8 Why you are doing something,
where it will lead to –
consider these seriously
before deciding on any action.

9 Why he is doing it,
where it will lead to,
how it will help him –
the steady man thinks of all these.

10 A king without information
about his territory, profit, loss,
treasury, population, and system of justice
can never rule his kingdom well.

11 But a king who sees all this clearly
is skilled
in dharma-and-artha,
and will rule with confidence.

12 Old age ruins youthful looks;
pride ruins a king.
No king should be proud
simply because he has a kingdom.

13 It is the greedy fish that forgets
the result of action
and swallows the tempting bait
that conceals the steel hook.

14 If you seek success,
swallow only what you can eat;
and eat only what you can digest.
This promotes health.

15 Plucking unripe fruits from a tree
will bring no juice to the plucker.
He will also have destroyed
the seeds.

16 Plucking ripe fruit at the right time
not only supplies the juice,
but ensures more fruits
from the seeds.

17 A man should take wealth
without harming others,
like a bee, gently sipping honey,
without spoiling the flower.

18 Pluck flowers carefully,
without damaging their roots,
like a maker of garlands,
not a digger of coal.

19 Consider what is involved
in doing an act and not doing it.
Only then decide to act
or not to act.

20 Never take on work you are not sure
you can finish,
or work that, taken on,
becomes a futile chore.

21 No wife wants an impotent husband.
No people want a leader
whose anger is hollow
and influence fruitless.

22 Work that involves mini-roots
and mahā-fruits
is work that a wise man instantly
sets his hands to.

23 A king who looks with compassion
as if drinking
with his eyes what he looks at,
may sit still,
and do nothing, but his subjects
will adore him.

24 The royal tree should have flowers,
but not too much fruit;
is should have fruit,
but not easy to lay lands on;
its fruits, though unripe, should look ripe.
Such kings are mighty.

25 People admire the man who has four ways
of pleasing them –
with eyes, mind,
words, and deeds.

26 If people fear a man
as deer fear a hunter,
he may own the sea-girt earth,
but he will lose it.

27 Like a wind scattering clouds,
the unjust deeds
of a king break up
a mighty ancestral inheritance.

28 The rājā who practises the dharma
that good men have followed
from the ancient past,
increases his wealth.

29 The lands of the king, who follows adharma
after discarding dharma,
crumple like leather
flung in a fire.

30 The efforts one makes to destroy
another's kingdom
should preferably be spent
on improving one's own.

31 Win a kingdom by dharma,
cherish it with dharma.
With dharma as root,
no kingdom is wasted, or lost.

32 Extract learning from everything,
like gold from rock;
even from a lunatic's ravings,
from the babble of a baby.

33 Like a *śilāhārī*-gleaner of corns
fallen in a field,
a man should collect good deeds,
words, and behaviour.

34 Cows see by smelling,
Brahmins see with the Vedas,
rājās see with spies,
the common man sees with his eyes.

35 The cow that is hard to milk
gets beaten;
the cow that is easy to milk
gets caressed.

36 Metal which bends without heat
will never feel heat.
Wood that bends without effort
is not passed through fire.

37 Learn from this. A wise man bends
to a stronger man;
he who bends to a stronger
is actually *praṇāma-ing* Indra.

38 Parjanya the rain-god sustains cattle,
ministers sustain a rājā,
a wife's friend is her husband,
a Brahmin's friend the Vedas.

39 Truth protects dharma,
yoga protects knowledge,
cleanliness protects beauty,
character protects a family.

40 Grain is protected by sifting,
horses by exercises,
cow by constant care,
women by unrevealing dresses.

41 In my opinion, character matters,
not noble birth,
even men of low birth
show exemplary character.

42 Anyone who envies another's wealth,
beauty, success, valour, noble birth,
luck, happiness, and renown
suffers from an incurable disease.

43 Let him not touch liquor
who fears acting improperly,
or forgets to act properly,
or prematurely discloses his plants.

44 Pride in learning, pride in wealth,
pride in power and noble birth –
good men should conquer
these weaknesses.

45 Dishonest men sometimes start thinking
themselves honest
if they do even the smallest work
for honest men.

46 Holy men give refuge to themselves
and other only men;
the unholy shelter the unholy
and never the holy.

47 The well-dressed speaker triumphs in a sabhā;
the cow-owner triumphs
over his craving for sweets;
vehicle-owners triumph over roads;
the man of character
triumphs over everything.

48 Character matters most in man.
Without character,
what is life, what is wealth,
what are friends?

49 Flesh-foods are staple for the rich;
milk-foods are staple
for the middle-class;
oily foods for the poor.

50 The tastiest food is enjoyed
by the poor,
because hunger gives relish.
And hunger is rare among the rich.

51 The rich have hardly the śakti
to digest what they eat,
while the poor can digest
even chunks of wood.

52 The poor fear most
the loss of a job;
the middle-class fears death,
the rich fear dishonour.

53 Power-intoxicated rascals are worse
than wine-intoxicated ones,
for they never become sane
till all their power vanishes.

54 Like the planets influencing the stars,
the senses
are blindly and adversely influenced
by the material world.

55 The sorrows of the man
who is trapped by his senses
to unthinking action
increase like the waxing moon.

56 Strength is sapped from the man
who tries to control advisers
without controlling himself, and control foes
without controlling advisers.

57 This much is certain:
the fives senses are the chief enemies.
Control them, and advisers and enemies
get easily controlled.

58 He prospers who controls his senses,
who dispenses justice impartially,
who is prudent
and patient.

59 The body's the chariot, O rājā,
the ātman the driver,
the senses the horses.
If the horses are tamed
with care and patience,
the journey is smooth.

[V:34:60-67]

Transcreated by P. Lal

60 The untamed senses lead only
to confusion,
and untamed horses lead weak drivers
to disaster.

61 Deluded by his senses,
a fool mistakes sorrow for joy,
for he cannot tell worthless from useful,
and useful from worthless.

62 The spurner of dharma-and-artha,
who lives by his senses,
will soon lose fame and energy,
wealth and wife.

63 The master of riches
who is slave of his senses
loses his riches
by not controlling his senses.

64 Know yourself by your self,
know the ātman by the ātman.
Discipline mind, intellect,
and senses.
You are your own friend,
you are your own enemy
Ātman's friend is ātman,
ātman's foe is ātman.

65 The man who controls the ātman
has ātman as friend,
the man who does not control it
has it as foe.

66 A large fish breaks out of a flimsy net,
O rājā
So kāma and anger break through
imperfect self-knowledge.

67 The man who seeks success
by cherishing dharma-and-artha
is rewarded
with a happy life.

68 The man who tries to subdue
other enemies
before subduing his five mind-based foes,
is soon crushed.

69 There are many cases of mahātmā rājās
who lusted for kingdoms
and obtained only ruin because they failed
to control their senses.

70 The guilty and innocent,
if found together,
get equally punished,
like damp sticks burning
along with dry faggots.
Shun friendship with wickedness.

71 You have five greedy foes
who feed on five different objects.
Sorrow awaits the fool
who cannot control them.

72 These will not be found
in the ill-ātmaned man:
absence of envy, simplicity, purity, contentment,
self-control, truth, spontaneity.

73 These will not be found, O Bharata descendant,
in inferior men:
atman-knowledge, patience, dharma-deeds,
secret counsel, generosity.

74 The stupid use insult and slander
to harm the wise;
the malice-monger is guilty,
his victim is free

75 Injury's the strength of the wicked,
justice the strength of rājās,
selfless service of women,
patience of good persons.

76 Control over speech is most difficult –
or so they say, O king.
It is hard to say profound things
in pleasing ways.

77 Sweetly-spoken words produce
beneficial results, O rājā;
the same words spoken harshly
can cause great harm.

78 An arrow-pierced and scythe-sliced forest
grows again,
but a heart injured by harsh words
never recovers.

79 *Karṇi*, *nālī* and *nārāca* arrows
can be removed from the flesh,
but harsh words remain forever embedded
in the wounded heart.

80 Word-arrows are shot
from the mouth, and they hurt
night and day; they are arrows
that pierce the innermost
recesses; the learned
never shoot them.

81 Before the gods vanquish a man,
they first steal his good sense;
and he indulges
in unrighteous deeds.

82 His discrimination gets muddled.
Ruin approaches,
but he continues to see wrong
as right.

83 The minds of your sons are warped
by their hatred of the Pāṇḍavas,
but, O bull-brave Bharata,
you fail to see this.

84 Yudhiṣṭhira has the auspicious marks
of a rājā, O Dhṛtarāṣṭra;
he is lord of the three worlds.
Let him rule the earth.

85 He is superior to your sons
in dharma-and-artha,
in energy, and intelligence;
he has all the virtues.

86 O Indra-among rājās!
Dharma-firm Yudhiṣṭhira
combines gentleness and goodness;
he has suffered despite his respect for you."

## SECTION THIRTY-FIVE

1 "O mahā-learned Vidura,"
"continue your discourse
of dharma-and-artha.
I desire more and more of your advice."

2 Visiting *tīrthas* and bathing in them
is equal to honesty
shown to all creatures (said Vidura).
No honesty is sincerer.

3 Be honest with your children.
This will earn you fame in this world,
and heaven itself in the next.
O radiant one,

4 O tiger-among-men,
a man enjoys heaven
so long as his deeds are praised
on earth.

5 In this connection one hears the old story
of the conversation
between Virocana and Sudhanvā,
in the case of Keśinī.

6 An incomparably beautiful girl
named Keśinī, O rājā,
decided on a *svayamvara* to choose
an excellent husband.

7 Virocana, son of Diti, came,
eager to marry her.
Keśinī said to that Indra-like leader
of the anti-gods:

8 "Who are superior, O Virocana –
Brahmins or anti-gods?
Why can't Sudhanvā sit
on the same couch as you?"

9 "We are Prajāpati's offspring, Keśinī,"
replied Virocana,
"the best. The world is ours.
Who are gods and twice-born Brahmins?"

10 "We will wait here," said Keśinī.
"Sudhanvā arrives
early next morning.
I will meet you both then."

11 "Good girl! Lovely one!" said Virocana,
"I will wait.
You will see me and Sudhanvā
together tomorrow."

12 The night passed,
the maṇḍala of the sun shone.
O excellent rājā,
Sudhanvā came to the place
where Virocana had earlier talked
with Keśinī.

13 Sudhanvā came to Keśinī;
and Virocana, son of Prahlada,
seeing him arrive,
rose, O bull-brave Bharata,
and offered him water for his feet,
in respectful *arghya.*

14 "I touch this splendid golden couch,"
said Sudhanvā,
"I cannot sit on it, son of Prahlāda,
and be on your level."

15 "You are fit for a plank, a strip of cloth,
or a grass mat,"
replied Virocana.
"You do not deserve my seat."

16 Sudhanvā replied:
"Father and son, two Brahmins,
two Kṣatriyas, two old men,
and two Śūdras can sit together.
None others can occupy
the same seat.

17 Your father respected me
and sat lower than me.
You are a pampered son,
you know nothing."

18 Virocana said: "I am prepared
to wager gold, cattle,
horses and other anti-god wealth
for an expert opinion."

19 "What are gold, cattle and horses?"
said Sudhanvā.
"Let's stake our lives, Virocana,
and ask those who know."

20 "But where will we go
after staking our lives?"
asked Virocana. "I will not face men
or the gods."

21 "We will go to your father,"
said Sudhanvā,
"after staking our lives.
Prahlāda won't lie, even for his son."

22 Staking their lives,
agitated Virocana and Sudhanvā
went to the palace
of Prahlāda.

23 Those two, who had never travelled
together before,
are coming like two excited snakes
(thought Prahlāda).

24 "Are you both friends now?" he asked.
"You were not earlier.
Virocana, how is it you have suddenly.
become so cordial?"

25 "Not cordial, father," replied Virocana.
"We have staked our lives.
I will ask you a question.
Answer me truly."

26 "Bring water, honey and curds for Sudhanvā,"
said Prahlada
"You are a Brahmin.
I respect you.
I gift you a white
and healthy cow.

27 Sudhanvā said: "I received water,
honey and curds
on the way. I have a question.
Answer me truly.
Are Brahmins superior,
or is Virocana superior?"

28 "I have only one son,
and you are a Brahmin,"
Prahlāda said. "That being so,
how can I settle your quarrel?"

29 "Keep your cow and your precious wealth,"
said Sudhanvā.
"But tell me the true answer to our dispute,
O learned one."

30 "Tell me, Sudhanvā," asked Prahlāda,
"what happens to the tongue-misuser
who speaks neither truth
nor falsehood?"

31 Sudhanvā said: "He tosses at night
like a wife
whose husband sleeps with a co-wife,
like a gambler defeated at dice,
like a tired man
burning with fever.

32 The man who commits perjury
starves
at the city's outer gates,
hounded by his enemies.

33 A lie for an animal means
five ancestors
falling from heaven;
for a cow, ten ancestors;
for a horse, a hundred;
for a man, a thousand.

34 A lie for gold means the ruin
of one's born
and unborn race;
for land, the ruin of all.
Never speak a falsehood
for the sake of land."

35 Prahlāda said: "Sudhanvā's father
excels me,
Sudhanvā excels Virocana.
Sudhanvā's mother excels Virocana's mother.
Virocana, you have been defeated
by Sudhanvā.

36 Sudhanvā now is the master
of your life.
Sudhanvā, return his life to Virocana:
I wish it so."

37 Sudhanvā said: "You chose dharma, Prahlāda,
you resisted kāma
and spoke the truth:
I return your dear son to life.

38 Prahlāda, your son Virocana
whose life I have returned,
must wash my feet
before Keśinī."

39 Therefore, O Indra-among-rājās
(continued Vidura)
do not prevaricate for land.
Do not ruin your sons
and your ministers
by refraining from truth-speaking.

40 The gods do not protect men
with the sticks
that herdsmen carry.
They provide intelligence instead.

41 The more a man inclines
to noble deeds,
the more he finds success waiting.
This is certain.

42 The deceitful who use
the ways of dishonour
are not saved by Vedic chants.
The Vedas desert them
like full-fledged birds
forsaking their nests.

43 Avoid all of these:
intoxicated brawls,
breaking-up a marriage,
betraying a king,
sowing needless discord
between man and woman,
fomenting mischief
between family members,
and ill-maintained roads.

44 Don't summon as witness
a palmist, a fowler,
a robber-turned-trader,
a doctor, a friend,
an enemy, or one
of loose habits – these seven.

45 A vow of silence,
the *agnihotṛ* ritual,
painstaking study,
a showing-off yajña –
these four are perilous
when imperfectly performed.

46 An arsonist, a poison-giver, a pimp,
a soma-juice seller,
an arrow-maker, a double-dealer,
a friend-harmer, an adulterer,

47 An abortionist, a seducer of his guru's wife,
a Brahmin drunkard,
a foul-mouthed man, an atheist,
a Veda-hater,

48 A bribe-taker,
a delayer of his sacred-thread rite,
a cattle-poisoner,
a betrayer of one who says "Save me" –
all these are the same
as a Brahmin-murderer.

49 Gold is tested by fire,
good birth by behaviour,
honest man by conduct,
a hero in danger,
patience in adversity,
friends and foes in crisis.

50 Old age ruins beauty;
ambition ruins patience;
envy, dharma; death, life;
anger ruins success;
bad friends, good manners;
kāma, modesty; pride, everything.

51 Good karma alone brings
the goddess of prosperity, Śrī:
she demands activity and skill
and self-control.

52 These are eight shining guṇas:
intelligence, good birth,
discipline, learning,
prowess, brevity,
generous charity,
a sense of gratefulness.

53 *Tāta*! My friend! One virtue alone
makes all these mahā-
qualitities unite –
respect from a rājā.
No lustre is greater
than that for a man.

54 In the world of humans,
eight qualities are said
to be pathways to heaven.
Of these eight, they say four
belong to the saintly,
and four to the honest.

55 The virtues of the saintly –
yajña and charity,
tapasyā and study.
The virtues of the honest –
self-control and truth,
simplicity and non-injury.

56 Eight roads lead to dharma:
yajña, study, charity,
tapasyā, truth, patience, mercy,
and absence of greed.

57 The first four may be found
in proud and selfish men,
but the remaining four are found only
in mahātmās.

58 No sabhā is possible
without elders in it.
They are not elders
who don't discuss dharma.
Without truth, is no dharma.
With deceit, is no truth.

59 These ten come from heaven:
truth, beauty, śruti-revelation,
knowledge, noble birth, character, strength,
wealth, courage, eloquence.

60 The ill man who does ill deeds
gets ill fruits;
the good man who does good deeds
finds goodness.

61 That is why a man should abstain
from ill deeds.
Repeated indulgence in ill deeds
destroys wisdom.

62 The man with lost wisdom
always does ill deeds.
Repeated indulgence in good deeds
enhances wisdom.

63 A man with enhanced wisdom
does further good deeds.
His good deeds bring him fame
and a holy refuge.
That is why a man should do
good deeds.

64 The envious, aggressive, cruel,
the inimical, and the deceitful
soon find themselves
in trouble.

65 The unenvious and wise man,
who always does good,
never faces difficulties;
indeed, he shines everywhere.

66 The man who gathers wisdom from the wise,
is wise;
his wisdom makes him succeed
in dharma-and-artha.

67 Act so in the day
that you will have peace at night;
strive in eight months
for peace in the rainy four.

68 Act so in your youth that happiness
attends old age;
live so this life that happiness
attends after death.

69 Prized is food that's easily digested,
a wife whose beauty is past,
a hero who wins a battle,
a successful practiser of tapasyā.

70 One's misdeeds cannot be covered
with wealth gained by adharma,
for new misdeeds
are then exposed.

71 The guru governs those with controlled ātmans,
the rājā those with ill-ātmans,
and Yama
those who are secretly vile.

72 Impossible to gauge the extent
of the harm
that unrestained rivers, ṛṣis, families, mahātmās,
and women can do.

73 Pūjā-respecting the twice-born,
the gift-giver,
one who helps relatives, and a noble Kṣatriya,
brings great power, O rājā.

74 These three – the brave, the wise,
the protectors of others –
pluck golden flowers
from the earth.

75 O Bharata! The karma of the mind is best;
the karma of the arms is good;
of the thighs, bad;
of head-loads, the worst.

76 You have left your kingdom
in the hands of Duryodhana,
Śakuni, foolish Duḥśāsana, and Karṇa.
How will you prosper?

77 O bull-brave Bharata!
The Pāṇḍavas have all the virtues.
To them you are like a father;
treat them like your sons.

## SECTION THIRTY-SIX

1 In this connection (Vidura continued)
one hears the ancient history
of the conversation between the Sādhyas
and Atri's son.

2 That strict-vowed mahā-wise mahā-ṛṣi happened
to be wandering
as a *haṁsa*-mendicant;
the Sādhya-gods said to him:

3 "We are known as the Sadhyas.
You are unknown to us.
You look wise, and acquainted
with *śruti*-scriptures; instruct us
in learning that's liberal
in words full of wisdom."

4 Ātreya replied: "Immortal ones!
Restraint and tranquillity,
and the dharma of truth
unite the heart's knots,
making pleasant and unpleasant
the same to the ātman.

5 Do not abuse the abuser. The pain of the abused
burns the abuser, and the abused takes away
the abuser's good karma.

6 Neither mock others,
nor condemn them.
Do not quarrel with friends,
do not mix with the vulgar.
Shun pride, and refrain
from passionate speech.

7 Intemperate speech
sears flesh and bones,
and marrow and heart.
The follower of dharma
assiduously shuns
agitated speech.

8 The unfortunate man
who pierces the heart
with the thorns of his words
reveals on his face
the anguish and death
that wait for all mortals.

9 If arrowy words
like the sun or fire
inflame a wise man,
let him quietly absorb them,
knowing that he gathers
the other's good karma.

10 Like a cloth that acquires
the stain of a dye,
a man will get coloured
by whoever he befriends –
a good man, a rascal,
an ascetic, or a thief.

11 The gods welcome
the man who, mocked,
does not mock;
the man who, when struck,
does not strike back
nor harm his assailant.

12 To be silent is better
than to speak. If you speak,
speak the truth. If the truth,
make it pleasing; if pleasing,
make sure it agrees
with the tenets of dharma.

13 A man becomes like him
with whom he mixes,
or whom he serves,
or who he has as his ideal.

14 What a man stays away from,
he becomes free from.
To be free from everything is to be free
from sorrowful mortality.

15 Such a man does not conquer
nor is conquered; this man
does not harm, he is never
a foe; he is calm
getting honour or insult,
not rejoicing, not grieving.

16 He desires the welfare of all,
the downfall of none.
He is truthful, gentle, disciplined –
the finest of men.

17 In-between is the man who consoles
the distressed without hypocrisy,
who does what he promises,
and accepts human frailties.

18 The inferior man
is ungentle, and angry,
aggressive, ungrateful,
incapable of friendship,
afflicted by greed,
and other defects.

19 The inferior man cannot accept
the goodness of others,
and ultimately loses
even friends.

20 The seeker of prosperity should always
emulate the good,
sometimes the in-between –
but never the inferior.

21 The self-seeking person
secures riches by force,
or cleverness, effort,
and skill; yet he never
gains fame or the praise
of the highborn noble."

22 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked:
"The gods love the highborn,
the learned, the followers
of dharma-and-artha.
I ask you this, Vidura –
who are the highborn?

23 And Vidura answered:
The highborn are those
with tapasya and discipline,
who are wise in the Vedas,
give food-gifts, perform yajñas,
and virtuously marry.

24 The highborn are those
who never discard dharma,
whose *pitṛs* are happy,
who presevere in goodness,
add fame to their families,
and never speak untruth.

25 High birth is degraded
by yajñas forgotten,
by unvirtuous marriages,
by Vedas unstudied,
and dharma repeatedly
demeaned and flouted.

26 High birth gets degraded
when Brahmins are mocked,
and their wealth
and the property of gods misappropriated.

27 O Bharata descendant!
High birth gets degraded
when Brahmins are defamed,
and wealth left in trust is misused.

28 Ill-mannered families
cannot be called families
though they own large herds of cattle
and enjoy sumptuous wealth.

29 The really noble families are those
who have good manners,
though they may have little wealth.
They become mahā-famous.

30 Wealth comes and goes;
noble conduct stays.
The unwealthy are not poor;
it is the ill charactered who are poor.

31 There is no point honouring families
who are learned,
and have horses and farms,
if they are deficient in character.

32 Let none in our family
breed for us enemies;
let none be a courtier
to a rājā who steals
what belongs to others:
let none be the foe
of his own well-wisher;
let none be a hypocrite;
let none sit and eat
without first offering
to *pitṛs* and gods
and the guests in his house.

33 Let no relative mix with us
who has killed a Brahmin,
or wished one harm
or refused *pitṛs.*

34 Never missing in the house of a good man
are these four:
a coir mat, sitting space, water,
and sweet words.

35 O mahā-wise rājā! These are always available
to be offered with *śraddhā*-respect,
in the homes
of virtuous dharma-followers.

36 The *syandana*-tree, O king,
though slender can support
more weight than others;
men of high birth
can endure more suffering
than inferior mortals.

37 He is no friend
who is served with fear,
whose anger creates fear;
he is a friend
whom one trusts like a father.
Other friendships are flimsy.

38 The absolute stranger who acts
like a friend –
he is the real friend, the refuge,
the saviour.

39 He is not likely to make friends
who is whimsical,
unstable, restless, and has no respect
for the elderly.

40 Prosperity deserts the fickle-minded,
the anti-ātman, obsessed by sense-pleasures –
like a swan deserting
a dried-up lake.

41 To flare up without warning,
to make up on impulse –
are signs of defective,
cloud-shifty men.

42 Even birds of prey are repelled
by the corpses of men
who showed ingratitude
to helpful friends.

43 Poor or rich, a man can seek favours
from his friends.
How can a friend show sincerity or insincerity
unless approached?

44 Despair ruins beauty.
Despair ruins prowess.
Despair ruins discrimination.
Desapir brings disease.

45 Despair leads to no positive result,
despair consumes the health,
and delights one's foes.
Do not despair.

46 Men die and are re-born,
men wither and prosper,
men help and are helped,
men mourn and are mourned –
again and again,
again and again.

47 Sorrow and joy;
adversity, success;
losing and gaining,
death and rebirth –
this is life. So the wise
neither grieve nor are glad.

48 The senses are fickle,
they shift and change.
Like water that trickles
through holes in a pot,
intelligence escapes
through the defective senses.

49 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
like a raging fire,
will destroy my wicked sons,
because I betrayed him.

50 Despair everywhere!
I see nothing but despair!
O mahā learned one,
pull me out of my despair."

51 O blameless one! I see no way
(replied Vidura)
but knowledge, tapasyā, control of the senses,
and renunciation of avarice.

52 Knowledge removes fear,
and tapasyā brings mahā-attainment,
serving gurus provides enlightenment,
yoga supplies peace.

53 Gift-giving does not bring mokṣa,
nor Veda-study;
mokṣa comes by discarding the fetters
of anger and envy.

54 After concentrated study,
after a war well won,
after good deeds, after tapasyā achieved,
comes a sense of deep joy.

55 Those who quarrel with relatives
are sleepless, though lying
on elegant couches;
they find no delight, O rājā,
in women, or in praises
by professional bards.

56 Those who quarrel with relatives
forsake what is dharma;
they discover no joy
in this world – and no fame;
for them are no pleasing
prospects of peace.

57 They cannot be pleased
with beneficial speech;
their yoga is fuitile, O king.
Those who quarrel with relatives
inevitably accomplish
their own destruction.

58 Expect milk in cows,
tapasyā in Brahmins,
fickleness in women,
and quarrels among relatives.

59 Thin threads twined bear easily
the pull of the heaviest shuttle;
the same happens
when good men unite.

60 Separate logs produce smoke,
but united they burst into bright flame.
The same happens
among blood relations.

61 Those who are cruel towards Brahmins,
women, relatives and cows
drop, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
like over-ripe fruit.

62 No matter how big or strong,
a single tree
can quickly be toppled
by a strong wind.

63 But trees that grow in groups
can survive
the strongest blasts,
because they support each other.

64 A single individual,
though gifted with all virtues,
can be crushed,
like a tree by a tempest.

65 Relatives should grow like lotuses
in a lake,
giving each other the assistance
that is needed.

66 These seven must never be killed:
Brahmins, cows,
relatives, children, women, hosts,
and protection-seekers.

67 O rājā! What is there greater for a man
than to have
wealth and health?
The unhealthy man is a corpse.

68 Mahārāja, take anger –
a drink that is pungent,
fiery and painful,
a disease that afflicts
the healthy – and gulp it down;
be wise, and be at peace.

69 Enjoyments are not
for those with diseases,
no pleasure for them
in their wealth. The disease-
afflicted, always miserable,
never enjoy wealth.

70 Recall my advice
when Draupadī was dragged:
*Stop Duryodhana, O rājā!*
The paṇḍit avoids
gambling excesses.
But you did not listen.

71 The opposite of softness
is not known as strength,
It is dharma that matters.
The crooked are ruined.
A blend of strength and softness
is valued by one's children.

72 May Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
be friends with the Pāṇḍavas;
may the Pāṇḍavas do likewise.
Let the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas
have the same friends and foes,
and be happy and prosperous.

73 The Kauravas depend on you,
O Ajamīḍha descendant.
*Tāta*! My friend, be advised
to shelter the Pāṇḍavas,
Kuntī's young children,
afflicted with exile.

74 O Kaurava, make peace
with the sons of Pāṇḍu.
Don't strengthen your foes.
The Pāṇḍavas are firm in truth.
O god-like mortal! Indra-among-men!
Convince Duryodhana he's wrong.

## SECTION THIRTY-SEVEN

1 O Indra-among-rājās Vaicitravīrya-Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Manu, Self-Born Brahmā's descendant,
lists the following seventeen as men
who flail air with fists, (continued Vidura),

2 Or try to bend the vapoury sky-bow
of Indra,
or try to catch the ungraspable rays
of the sun –

3 The man who attempts
to control the uncontrollable,
who's pleased with small gains,
who flatters his enemies,
who tries to restrain
whimsical women,
who pleads for improper
favours, who boasts
of petty achievements,

4 The highborn who does
undignified deeds,
the weak man who challenges
a powerful foe,
the garrulous speaker
to a mocking listener,
the man who has kāma
for things that no man
should have kāma for,

5 A father-in-law frivolous
with daughter-in-law,
a father-in-law boasting
of solace received
from daughter-in-law,
the man who sows seeds
in the land of another,
the man who publicly
criticises his wife,

6 The man who declares
he's forgotten the favour
another once did him,
the man who is boastful
of the good he has done,
the man who attempts
to pass lies for truth.
Yama's servants, with nooses,
drag such men to hell.

7 It is dharma to do to others
what others do to you.
Trick the trickster.
Be honest with the honest.

8 Old age destroys beauty,
waiting destroys hope,
dharma destroys worldliness,
death destroys life,
kāma destroys shame,
nobility of behaviour
destroys bad companions,
anger destroys success,
pride destroys everything.

9 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked: "The Vedas say
man's life is a hundred years.
Why do not all men
live that long?"

10 O lord of men! They are proud (Vidura replied),
garrulous, indisciplined;
they over-eat, they are passionate,
they quarrel with friends; –

11 These six defects are like swords
cutting off men in their prime.
These, not death, kill.
May you prosper!

12 The man who commits adultery
with the wife
of one who trusts him,
the man who has intercourse
with the wife of a guru,
the Brahmin who marries
a Śūdra girl,
the man who is an alcoholic,

13 The man who tyrannises Brahmins,
or deprives them of livelihood,
who appropriates
their lands,

or kills those who seek his protection,
gathers the guilt
of a Brahmin-murderer.
The Vedas say that association
with such a man
requires full crime-expiation.

14 The wise and eloquent man
knows what is dharma,
and is the last to eat;
he cherishes ahiṁsā,
he is truthful and humble,
he is worthy of heaven.

15 The pleasant speaker is very easy to find,
O rājā.
Hard to find are speaker and listener
of the beneficially unpleasant.

16 The raja's best adviser is the man
who, having dharma in view,
speaks what's pleasant or unpleasant
before his lord.

17 For the family, sacrifice a man;
for the village, a family;
for the country, a village;
for the ātman, the world.

18 One needs wealth to protect against adversity;
one's wealth protects one's wife;
wealth and wife
protect oneself.

19 From ancient times,
gambling has bred animosity;
the wise do not gamble
even as a pastime

20 Vicitravīrya's son! O rājā!
When the dice-game began,
I said it was wrong.
But to you my words
were bitter, like medicine
to a sick man.

21 With the Kaurava crows
you intend to subdue
the Pāṇḍava peacocks.
Abandoning lions,
you encourage jackals.
You will regret this.

22 The master, who seldom
gets angry with servants
who honour him deeply,
soon earns their confidence,
and even in peril
receives their support.

23 Even gaining a kingdom
is futile, if servants
are deprived of employment.
Deprived of their pleasures,
affectionate courtiers
will turn against their king.

24 Decide on a plan.
Know income and expense.
And after this make
the required alliances.
Alliances achieve
the most difficult goals.

25 The servant who guesses
the mind of his master
and, promptly and honestly,
attends to his needs
in proper proportion,
is held as an intimate.

26 Dismiss on the spot
the servant who argues
when ordered to act,
and shows off his knowledge,
even daring to scoff
at the skill of his master.

27 Employ as an envoy
a man with eight virtues:
ability, and absence
of pride, and efficiency,
strength, kindness, good health,
eloquence, adaptability.

28 Do not trustfully go
at night to the home
of a man you distrust.
Do not lurk at night
in the yard of the house
of a stranger; and specially,
do not yearn for relations
with a woman for whom
a rājā feels kāma.

29 Do not try to refute
the views of a man
advised by low men.
Do not say, "I refuse
to believe you", but quietly
avoid him and leave.

30 The following should never
do lending or borrowing:
a rājā who's gentle,
a prostitute, a man
who serves in a palace,
a brother, a son,
a widow with babies,
a soldier, and one
who's financially ruined.

31 Eight virtues bring lustre
to human character:
wisdom, good birth,
excellence in *śruti*,
discipline, and prowess,
control of speech,
and charity practised
to the best of one's power,
and expression of gratitude.

32 These eight can be rolled
into one when a rājā
confers on a man
a singular honour –
that action inspires
and unites all these virtues.

33 These ten are obtained
by regular bathers:
beauty, and fitness,
clear voice, and ability
of right articulation,
softness of touch,
fragrance, and purity,
prosperity, smoothness,
and beautiful women.

34 These six are obtained
by moderate eaters:
happiness, and strength,
long life, fit children,
freedom from diseases,
no charge of gluttony.

35 Refuse to give shelter
in your home to these six:
the improperly-behaved,
the socially-defamed,
the cruel-minded,
the indecently-dressed,
the deceitful, and one
without any idea
of time-and-place propriety.

36 Refuse to approach
in even deepest distress:
the miserly, the mean,
the unlearned, the recluse,
the man who cannot
respect the respectworthy,
the cruel, the ungrateful,
the man who is always
adept at making enemies.

37 Refuse to serve
these despicable six:
the self-despiser,
the perpetual blunderer,
the liar, the man
of wavering bhakti,
the man without gentleness,
the man who believes
that he can do everything.

38 Ends depend on means:
success depends on help.
These two are interconnected:
one leads to the other.

39 After fathering sons
and providing for them,
after bestowing daughters
on suitable households,
a man should retire
to the woods like a *muni.*

40 The root of human success is:
Trusting in divinity,
one should act for others' good
and one's ātman's joy.

41 Why should a man fear life
who has the following –
intelligence, energy, strength, alertness.
skill and perseverance?

42 The calamities following
a war with the Pāṇḍavas
would make even Śakra-Indra
and the gods dejected –
continual friction
with one's own relatives,
unending anxiety,
degradation of honour,
and enemies exulting.

43 O Indra-like rājā!
The anger of Bhīma
and Droṇa and you
and Yudhiṣṭhira will ruin
the world like a comet
that strikes at an angle.

44 Your hundred sons, Karṇa,
and the five Pāṇḍavas
can easily share among them and rule
the sea-girt earth.

45 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons are the forest;
the Pāṇḍavas, O rājā, are the tigers,
Don't destroy the forest,
don't kill the tigers.

46 You cannot have forest without tigers,
nor tigers without forest.
The forest protects the tigers,
the tigers the forest.

47 Ill-motived people avoid the good qualities
of others;
they concentrate their attention
on others' defects.

48 The man seeking artha should begin
with dharma;
only heaven provides amṛta,
only dharma provides artha.

49 All the natural and artificial things
of the world
are comprehended by the man
whose ātman is not ill-directed.

50 The man who pursues at right times
dharma-and-artha-and-kāma
enjoys dharma-artha-kāma
here and elsewhere.

51 The man who restrains
both anger and excessive joy
prospers; so does the man who is calm
in adversity, O rājā.

52 Let me explain to you
the five human strengths.
The physical strength of one's arms
is the least.

53 Strength derived from good counsellors
is the second.
The strength of money, the wise say,
is the third.

54 The strength of birth,
derived from father and grandfather,
is *abhijāta*; it is described
as the fourth strength, O rājā.

55 The strength of intelligence is superior
to all these, O Bharata descendant,
because it co-ordinates and enhances
all of them.

56 After rousing the anger of a man
who has power to harm you,
don't try escaping, saying,
"He's far from me."

57 What wise man has ever put faith
in the following –
women, rājās, snakes, Vedic texts, lords, enemies,
luxuries, the life-span?

58 What doctors can help,
what medicine exists
for the man who is felled
by the arrow of wisdom?
Auspicious rituals,
the mantras of *homa*,
the Atharva-Veda,
antidotes to poison –
nothing can save him.

59 A snake, fire, lion, and a highborn son,
O Bharata descendant,
should never be taken lightly.
They have enormous power.

60 The power of fire is awesome;
it hides in wood
without consuming it –
until others provoke it.

61 The friction of dry sticks can start
a conflagration
whose devouring flames incinerate
an entire forest.

62 One's highborn relatives possess
that hidden fire;
they tolerate much, but anger lurks
like fire in wood.

63 The sons of Pāṇḍu are like *śāla*-trees,
your sons' dharma
is that of creepers. Creepers cannot prosper
without large trees.

64 Your sons are the forest, O rājā.
Pāṇḍavas the lions
in that forest, O Ambike!
No lions, no forest;
no forest, no lions.
Both need each other.

## SECTION THIRTY-EIGHT

1 A young man's life-breath soars away
when an old man arrives;
it returns after he rises
and welcomes the old man.

2 A patient man welcomes
with water to wash
the feet, and a seat.
He asks, "Are you well?",
then talks of himself,
and offers food.

3 The wise have declared:
His life is wasted
whose water and honey-
and-curds and cattle,
when offered, are spurned
by a knower of mantras
who refuses from fear,
or smallness of gift,
or any unwillingness.

4 None of these deserve
the offering of water,
but as guests should be welcomed:
a maker of arrows,
a doctor, a failure
in brahmacarya-vow,
a thief, a torturer,
a drunkard, an abortionist,
an army employee,
a seller of the Vedas.

5 One should not sell
cooked food, and salt,
honey, and milk,
curds, ghee, and oil,
meat, sesame-seeds,
roots, fruits, red cloth,
molasses, and perfumes.

6 The *bhikṣu* renounces
unpleasant and pleasant,
never yields to anger,
is unmoved by grief,
by praise and blame,
and expresses indifference
to dung-clay and gold,
and remains undisturbed
by friendship or enmity.

7 The finest of those
who practise tapasya
is the man who subsists

on wild rice and roots
and vegetables, follows
the strictest discipline,
lights the sacred fire,
and honours his guests
though he live in the forest.

8 After harming an intelligent man,
don't try escaping
saying, "He's far from me."
Such men have long arms.

9 Never trust the proved-to-be-untrustworthy,
never trust too much the trustworthy.
Such trusting can lead
to ruinous calamities.

10 Do not be envious, share justly,
be soft-spoken
and protect your wife,
but do not let her dominate you.

11 Wives deserve special protection.
They are the goddesses of the home,
bringers of mahā-fortune,
deserving of pūjā.

12 Entrust the supervision
of the inner apartments
to the father,
the kitchen to the mother,
the cattle to some person your equal,
agriculture to yourself.

13 Let your sons welcome Brahmin-guests,
your servants
attend to Vaiśya-guests.
From water emerges fire,
from Brahmins come Kṣatriyas,
from stone, iron.

14 These products have energy-forces
that affect others,
but are stilled by their progenitors.

People born
in high families have energy
equalling that of fire.

15 They are tolerant, but their energy
is hidden like fire in wood.
Whose inner and outer plans
are unknown –

16 That rājā has eyes everywhere,
and he prospers.
Do not speak of what's done,
or what is planned.

17 Do not reveal your plans
of dharma-kāma-artha to others.
Go to a hill-top,
a palace-roof,

18 A shrubless forest-clearing,
and plan your mission.
Never reveal important secrets to a non-friend,
O Bharata descendant,

19 Or an unlearned friend,
or an undisciplined learned friend.
A king should never appoint ministers
without investigation.

20 The prosperity and plans of a king
depend upon his ministers.
The king, whose plans are known
after fulfilment,

21 Whose plans are based on principles
of dharma-artha-kāma,
is the rājā of rājās. The secret planner
is the prosperous king.

22 The man who does wrong deeds
out of delusion
stands to lose his life as a result
of their consequences.

23 Praiseworthy karma leads to happiness.
In my opinion,
non-performance of such karma leads only
to regret and repentance.

24 A Veda-ignorant Brahmin cannot perform
a *śrāddha*-obsequy.
A minister ignorant of the six virtues
cannot serve a king.

25 He rules the world who possesses
the six virtues –
treaties, dissension,
patience, diplomacy, fairness;
who knows his ātman,
who knows how to handle
financial fluctuations,
who is above suspicion.

26 He rules the world
whose pleasure and displeasure
are effective, who controls the treasury,
and guides all policy.

27 An earth-lord should be content
with his honours
and the royal umbrella;
he should share his wealth
with his followers, and not have enjoyment
of sole possession.

28 Brahmin sees through Brahmin
as husband sees through wife;
king sees through minister;
and rājā sees through rājā.

29 A death-deserving enemy, if captured,
should not be freed.
If he is weak, you should flatter
even a death-deserving enemy.
If strong, get rid of him.
Alive, he is dangerous.

30 Control well anger against gods, rājā,
and Brahmins,
as well as against old people, children,
and invalids.

31 Never enter into a pointless quarrel.
Only fools do that.
It will save you grief,
and earn you fame.

32 No wife wants a eunuch husband.
No people want a king
whose anger is ineffectual,
and favour fruitless.

33 Intelligence does not always bring wealth,
nor laziness poverty;
intelligent men understand
the ways and whys of life, others do not.

34 Fools have always made fun of the learned,
the elderly,
the wealthy, the highborn,
and treated them disrespectfully.

35 The man who is ignoble,
lacking in wisdom, envious,
wrathful, foul-mouthed, given to adharma,
soon faces ruin.

36 All creatures are won over
by absence of deceit, by gifts,
by respect shown to others, promises kept,
and civilised speech.

37 Even if he is financially ruined,
the honest, grateful,
skilful, intelligent, and moderate person
will find friends.

38 Like fuel to fire,
these seven are to prosperity:
patience, serenity, self-control, purity, gentle speech,
compassion, not quarrelling with friends.

39 O king! Avoid the scoundrel
who will not give others their due,
who is ill-ātmaned, ungrateful,
and has no sense of shame.

40 The culprit who accuses an innocent person
of the crime he has himself committed
cannot sleep:
he lies with a serpent.

41 O Bharata! Placate promptly, as you would gods,
those who possess the power
to ruin your livelihood
through their influence.

42 Unlikely to succeed are those who depend
solely on women,
or on those who get distracted, or corrupted,
or are already corrupt.

43 Helpless like stones plummeting in a river,
O rājā,
are those who are ruled by women,
children, or gamblers.

44 Paṇḍits are those – or so I think –
who take on only
what they can accomplish;
their plans work smoothly, O Bharata.

45 The man who is eulogised
by gamblers and spies,
and of whom prostitutes think highly,
cannot flourish long.

46 You have forgotten the illimitably
powerful Paṇḍava bowmen,
and trusted your powers
to your son Duryodhana.

47 He will soon fall from power,
like foolish Bali
who fell from three-worlds' lordship
because he was proud.

SECTION THIRTY-NINE

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"No man is master
of his sorrow or joy:
he is a puppet
in the hands of fate.
Speak on; I am listening."

2 Vidura replied: Even Bṛhaspati himself,
speaking inopportunely, O Bharata descendant,
lays himself open to charges
of ignorance and insult.

3 Gifts make some loved;
sweet speech makes others loved;
mantras and drugs, others;
the lovable man is always loved.

4 The hated man is never wise, honest,
or intelligent to his hater.
The loved is all good,
the hated all bad.

5 When Duryodhana was born,
my advice was: Disown him
for the sake of your sons,
all hundred, O rājā.
Your refusal to do this
will lead to their ruin.

6 Reject the gain that leads
to a loss;
accept the loss that leads
to a gain.

7 Mahārāja, the loss that brings a gain
is no loss;
but the gain that brings loss
is real loss.

8 Some achieve fame by their character, O Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
others by wealth.
Avoid the wealthy, if they are deficient
in character.

9 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "You mean well.
You speak wisely.
Whre dharma is, victory is,
I cannot refuse my son."

10 Vidura replied:
The man who is truly virtuous
is moved by the slightest injury
to any creature.

11 But those who spread scandal
find themselves
always quarrelling
and engaged in harming others.

12 Mahā-risky to give wealth to,
or take wealth from,
people whose persence emanates mahā-fear
and viciousness.

14 Avoid associating with those
who are condemnable –
the scandal-mongers, the shameless,
the kāma-obsessed.

14 Avoid all who are possessed
by mahā-defects.
The slightest misunderstanding destroys
their friendship,

15 And whatever good may have resulted
from that friendship.
They then spread calumny
about their past friend.

16 The slightest rebuff upsets
their restless nature.
A man should never mix
with these low, cruel types.

17 He should use his discrimination
and keep a safe distance.
The man who helps his needy relatives
and the poor

18 Is rewarded with sons and animals
and vast prosperity.
Relatives should be helped
by whoever seeks happiness.

19 O Indra-among-rājās! Act in a manner
that will benefit your family.
Do good to your relatives, O rājā,
and obtain prosperity.

20 Even untalented relatives should be looked after,
O bull-brave Bharata.
Certainly those with talent
deserve your goodwill.

21 O lord of the world,
show favour towards the Pāṇḍavas.
Let them have a few villages
for their subsistence.

22 This deed will make you famous
in the world, O lord of men.
You are the elder,
you should keep your sons in check.

23 I mean you well.
My words are for your benefit.
A man who wants happiness
should never quarrel with relatives.
He should enjoy happiness
with his relatives.

24 What are relatives for
if they cannot eat together,
talk together, love one another?
Why quarrel?

25 Relatives redeem relatives, relatives doom relatives.
This world is so.
Those with character save;
those without, doom.

26 O Indra-among rājās,
show character with the Pāṇḍavas.
With their support, you will become
utterly invincible.

27 A man who suffers from prosperous relatives,
like a deer
alarmed by a bow-armed hunter,
has his bad karma
shared by the prosperous relatives
who harmed him.

28 Think, O finest of men. A time may come
when you will have to repent
the deaths of the Pāṇḍavas
and your sons.

29 Life is ephemeral.
Why should a man do karma
that will make him repent
when he lies on his death-bed?

30 With the exception of the Bhārgava-ṛṣi Śukra
all men do and have done misdeeds;
but honest men acknowledge
their misdeeds.

31 If the Pāṇḍavas have been wrongly treated
by Duryodhana,
it is your duty, as the elder, O lord of men,
to undo the wrong.

32 If you right the wrong, O finest of men,
your fame in this world wil be restored,
and intelligent men
will offer you pūjā-respect.

33 That man earns high praise who,
before acting,
thinks of the consequences of action
as warned by the wise.

34 The wisest teacher is helpless
if his advice is not grasped;
or, grasped,
is not implemented.

35 The intelligent man, refraining from misdeeds,
soon prospers.
The fool continues in his momentum
of misdeeds
and sinks into a bog from which
is no release.

36 A wise man should know the six doors
by which secrets shout,
if he wishes to pursue
artha and kāma:

37 Drunkenness, day-dreams,
carelessness about vigilant spies,
impulsiveness, ill counsel from advisers,
incompetent envoys.

38 Let him know these doors
and keep them shut
if he desires the triple success –
dharma-artha-kāma.

39 Even a man of Bṛhaspati's eminence, O king,
cannot attain dharma-and-artha
without respecting elders
and *śruti*-wisdom.

40 What is dropped in the ocean
is lost for ever;
the advice that goes unheeded
is lost for ever;
*śruti* is lost on the ātman
that is indisciplined;
a ghee oblation is lost
if poured on cold ashes.

41 Hear, see, and discriminate
before forming a friendship.
A wise man makes friends
with other wise men.

42 Humility overcomes calumny,
and skill overcomes adversity;
forbearance always overcomes anger,
and character overcomes inauspiciousness.

43 O rājā! A man's lineage is known
by his dress, behaviour,
house, amusements, place of birth,
and food preferences.

44 Even those who are free from sensuality
succumb to kāma if tempted;
even more so those who are slaves
of their kāma.

45 The man of dharma who respects the learned,
who has friends,
is soft-spoken and is pleasing to the eyes,
should be cherished.

46 Better than a hundred high-born men
is the man of dharma
who is humble and gentle
whether high or low-born.

47 That friendship is for ever
which has mind meet mind,
heart meet heart,
wisdom meet wisdom.

48 The wicked-minded and uncultured
should be shunned
as one would a grass-covered well.
Avoid such friends.

49 Avoid friendship with those
who stray from dharma,
who are proud, ignorant, impulsive,
and fierce.

50 Seek friendship with the man
who is grateful, sense-controlled,
truthful, unselfish,
who has bhakti and dharma.

51 More difficult than dying is detachment
of one's senses from their objects;
and excessive attachment
degrades even the gods.

52 Humility, compassion for all creatures,
forbearance, patience,
respect for one's friends –
all these add to one's life.

53 That man is firm of will who,
using right means,
seeks to re-accomplish in whatever field
he once failed.

54 That man succeeds who,
based firmly in the present,
faces the future
on the strength of the past.

55 What a man does, thinks, or speaks,
he becomes.
That is why a person should pursue
only the beneficial.

56 Beneficial are: struggle for virtue,
knowledge of *śruti*,
energetic enterprise, simplicity,
association with good people.

57 Perseverance is the root of fame, success,
and auspiciousness.
The man who perseveres
is the man who finds happiness.

58 *Tāta*! My friend! There is no better way
to success than for a strong man
to be forbearing at all times
and all places.

59 The weak should naturally forbear;
the powerful should do so
for dharma's sake, desiring neither fame
nor lack of it.

60 One should welcome the happiness
that does not run counter
to dharma-and-artha,
but not foolishly revel in it.

61 No prosperity attends the grief-ridden,
the self-important,
the unbelieving, indisciplined, slothful,
and ideal-less.

62 The crooked-minded
try to opress people
who are self-effacing and simple,
mistaking gentleness for weakness.

63 Śrī, goddess of prosperity, out of fear
stays away
from the ultra-honest, the ultra-generous,
the ultra-heroic,
the ultra-ascetic, and those who take pride
in their wisdom.

64 She stays away from people
who have too many virtues,
and those who have none.
She dislikes the all-virtuous,
the un-virtuous.
She wanders like an unpredictable cow.

65 Veda-study's fruits are *agnihotṛ* sacrifices;
*śruti*'s fruits are nobility of character;
women's fruits
are sex-pleasure aṇd sons;
wealth's fruits are gifts
and luxuries.

67 The strong-charactered man
does not face fear
in deserts, forests, forts, calamities,
and violence.

68 The roots of progress are:
energy, self-control, skill,
steadiness, perseverance,
and acting after mature planning.

69 The ascetic's strength is tapasyā,
the Veda-knower's strength is Brahman,
the strength of the wicked
is power to harm,
the strength of the virtuous
is forbearance.

70 These eight do not affect vow-observance:
water, roots, fruits, milk,
curds, ghee, a Brahmin's orders,
a guru's commands.

71 Never do to others
what you don't want done to you –
that, briefly, is dharma.
The rest is selfish kāma.

72 Transform anger with non-anger,
the characterless man with character,
the miser with gifts,
falseness with truth.

73 Never put trust in a woman,
a cheat, an idler;
or the fierce, the short-tempered,
the self-conceited,
the thief, the ungrateful,
and the negative-thinker.

74 The man who honours his elders
and attends to their needs,
increases his fame,
feats, power, and life.

75 Refrain from obtaining what can be had
only by excessive toil,
or by adharma, or by obsequience
before an enemy.

76 Pity the unlearned,
pity intercourse that is childless,
pity a king's starving subjects,
pity a kingdom in chaos.

77 To the long-travelling body,
age brings suffering;
to firm mountains, torrential rain
brings suffering;
to intercoursing women, pleasureless orgasm
brings suffering;
to the mind, malicious speech
brings suffering.

78 Nothing worse for the Vedas
than not to study them;
nothing worse for Brahmins
than to break vows;
nothing worse than the Bāhlīkas
among races of men;

79 Nothing worse for a man
than to speak a lie;
nothing worse for a virgin
than prurient curiosity;
nothing worse for a wife
than to be away from home.

80 Gold's scum is silver;
silver's scum is tin;
tin's scum is lead;
and lead's scum is dust.

81 Drowsiness is not overcome
by excessive sleep;
women are not won over by kāma;
fire cannot be extinguished by fuel,
nor drunkenness cured
by more drinking.

82 That man's success is assured
whose friends have been won by gifts,
whose enemies have been routed
in battle,
whose wife is contented
with basic amenities.

83 People, with thousands, live;
people with hundreds, live;
they manage, with more or less.
O Dhṛtarāṣṭra, curb your craving.

84 There is not enough success, gold, animals,
women in this world
to fill one man's appetite.
The wise are not deceived.

85 O rājā, I plead with you again
Behave equally, O rājā,
with your sons
and the sons of your brother Pāṇḍu.

## SECTION FORTY

1 Assisted by good men,
the person who struggles
to accomplish his tasks
within his ability
is rewarded with fame
by those he impresses.

2 If a man, by himself,
abandons a mission
that's fraught with adharma,
he is freed from his sorrows,
like a snake that is freed
from its cast-off slough.

3 Progress by untruth,
gossip that reaches a rājā,
deceiving a guru –
each is as vile as Brahmin-murder.

4 To see only faults is to die:
malice destroys success.
The three enemies of knowledge
are:
disrespect for elders, reckless haste,
and boastfulness.

5 In my opinion, these seven obstruct students
striving for knowledge;
laziness, inattentiveness,
lack of discrimination,
capriciousness, pointless socialising,
pride, and selfishness.

6 How can pleasure-seekers gain knowledge?
Students must not expect pleasure.
Stop seeking knowledge
if you want pleasure;
and renounce pleasure
if you seek knowledge.

7 Fuels don't satiate fires;
rivers don't satiate oceans;
creatures don't satiate death;
nor a lovely-eyed girl, men.

8 Hope destroys patience,
death destroys progress,
anger destroys prosperity,
stinginess destroys fame,
inattention destroys animals,
an angry Brahmin a kingdom.

9 Let the following always
have a place in your house:
goats, silver, and brass,
a bow, honey,
birds, and Brahmins
who are versed in the Vedas,
elderly relatives,
and nobly born people
reduced to poverty.

10 Goat, bull, sandalwood, vīṇā, mirror,
honey, ghee, water,
copper, conch-shell, gold, musk,
*rocana* bath-place –

11 These, according to Manu,
must always be in one's house
for the pūjā of gods, and Brahmins,
and guests.

12 Now, *tāta* my friend, listen
to the greatest of lessons,
the wisdom supreme:
Neither kāma, greed, nor fear,
not life itself should lead
to abandonment of dharma.

13 For dharma is stable;
joy and sorrow are passing.
Life too is stable,
but only in patches.
Discard the unstable!
Follow the stable!
Discover serenity;
the greatest possession
one has is serenity.

14 Look! Mahā-powerful monarchs
with grandeur and glory
enjoyed the wealth
and corn of their kingdoms,
but they too surrendered
their kingdoms and pleasures,
and became victims of Antaka-
death, the ultimate
and universal lord.

15 O rājā! Fathers have tenderly,
dishevelled and grieving.
lifted their sons
and placed them upon
the funeral pyre
like logs of wood.

16 The wealth and corn
of the dead are enjoyed
by the living,
their flesh is consumed
by fire and birds.
Only these two –
demerit and merit –
accompany mortals
to the other worlds.

17 Forsaking the corpse,
children, friends and relatives depart,
like birds deserting
flowerless and fruitless trees.

18 Only karma stays with the burning corpse.
Therefore,
take steps to cultivate
and slowly gather dharma.

19 In the world above,
and the world below
is enormous darkness,
the darkness that stupefies the senses.
O rājā,
know and avoid this darkness.

20 Pay heed to my words
and put them in practice.
Then fame will be yours
in this world, and never
will fear obstruct you
in this world or the next.

21 The ātman's a river
with sanctifying *tīrthas.*
Its waters are truth,
its banks self-control,
its waves are compassion.
The man of good karma
becomes pure bathing
in the selfless and holy
waters of the ātman.

22 With the boat of discipline.
cross the waves of birth-and-rebirth
of life's river of the five senses,
where kāma and anger are sharks.

23 The person who honours
friends who are old
in wisdom and age,
who have dharma and skill,
and accepts their advice,
is never deceived.

24 Use patience to control lust and appetitie;
use eyes
to control hands and feet;
use mind to control eyes and ears;
use karma to control
mind and words.

25 The Brahmin who's always
punctilious in ritual,
and wearing the thread,
and studying the Vedas,
who refuses the food
that's known as defiled,
who speaks truth, and reveres
his elders, will never
lose Brahman.

26 A Kṣatriya finds heaven
by studying the Vedas,
performing yajñas,
protecting his subjects,
and using his weapons
for ensuring the safety
of Brahmins and cows,
and being prepared
to die in battle.

27 A Vaiśya finds heaven
by studying the Vedas,
donating his wealth
among Brahmins and Kṣatriyas
and his own dependants,
and inhaling the smoke
that is holy and pure
of the three fires
of yajña-ritual.

28 A Śūdra finds heaven
by serving Brahmins,
Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas;
His demerits are burnt
in this service, and he
is freed of his karma.

[V:40:29-32; 41:1-4]

Transcreated by P. Lal

29 The dharmas of each
of the four castes are thus.
My reason for saying this is:
Yudhiṣṭhira is falling, O rājā,
from Kṣatriya-dharma.
Help him preserve it.

30 "Whatever advice you have given me,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"is right. I am in complete agreement
with your views.

31 I want to turn to the Pāṇḍavas
but my mind
seems to go the other way
under Duryodhana's influence.

32 No creature has the power to avert fate.
Fate will do
what fate will do.
Human effort is powerless."

## SECTION FORTY-ONE

1 "If anything remains unsaid, Vidura,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"tell it to me now.
Your words are fascinating."

2 Vidura replied: "Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the ancient immortal celibate
ṛṣi Sanat-sujāta was heard to say,
'There is no death.'

3 He will explain to you, mahārāja,
and answer
the questions you have openly asked
or kept hidden."

4 "Don't you know what that immortal ṛṣi
will tell me?"
asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra. "If you are wise,
you should tell me."

5 "I was born in a Śūdra womb,"
Vidura replied.
"I can say no more.
I know his wisdom is eternal.

6 He was born in a Brahmin womb.
I can assure you:
even the gods cannot stop him speaking
the profoundest truths."

7 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Tell me, Vidura,
how I can meet
that ancient and immortal seer
in my human body."

8 Vidura mentally invoked that strict-vowed ṛṣi,
O Bharata descendant,
(said Vaiśampāyana), and the ṛṣi appeared
before him.

9 Vidura received him with the traditional rites
of welcome.
After he was comfortably scated,
Vidura said to him:

10 "Revered one, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is perturbed,
and I cannot console him.
It is proper
that you should speak to him.

11 Your words will remove all his griefs.
Profit and loss,
pleasant and unpleasant,
age and death,

12 Fear and jealousy, hunger and thirst,
pride and success,
worry, sloth, kāma, anger, ups and downs –
will not upset him."

## SECTION FORTY-TWO

1 The rājā, mahātmā
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, inspired
by Vidura's words,
met Sanat-sujāta
in private to gain
the ultimate knowledge.

2 "O Sanat-sujāta,"
Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
"I hear that you say
death does not exist.
The gods and anti-gods
through brahmacarya
attempted to go
to the realm of non-death.
Which of these is right?"

3 You have asked me (said Sanat-sujāta)
if death exists,
and what karma leads to non-death.
Let me explain, O rājā.

4 Both statements are true.
O Kṣatriya, remember –
the wise have declared
delusion leads man
to death; but I say,
delusion itself
is death, and wherever
delusion is absent,
non-death is present.

5 The anti-gods, victims
of delusion, die;
gods, free from delusion,
become like Brahman.
Death is not a tiger.
Death has no shape.

6 Some imagine that Yama
is death, and non-death
is serene brahmacarya.
But Yama is lord
of the world of the *pitṛs*;
as lord of the *pitṛs*,
he values the virtuous,
and casts inauspiciousness
upon the inauspicious.

7 By Yama's command,
death appears in the shapes
of greed, anger and delusion.
Distracted by the ego
from the truth of the ātman,
men go astray.

8 Their thinking deluded
by powerful passions,
men die, and proceed
into hell with their senses;
their feelingless bodies
are said to be dead.

9 The men who desire
the fruits of their karma
are subject to death.
Their yoga-of-*bhoga*,
their passion-for-pleasures,
causes their re-birth.

10 The yoga-of-artha-
and-error is easy:
man's senses are drawn
into grievous delusions.
The ātman, involved
in the yoga-of-artha-
and-error, desires
whatever consists
of material pleasures.

[V:42:11-16]

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11 Attachment to things
is the way man is doomed;
anger and kāma
are subsequent steps.
These doom the childish.
But those who are steady
discover their steadiness
is a means of escaping
inevitable death.

12 Treat things with indifference,
control your desires
with the light of knowledge.
To the wise man who conquers
his kāma like this,
death is not death.

13 The following of kāma
destroys follower and kāma.
The conquest of kama
destroys all possible miseries.

14 Kāma is blindness, ignorance, hell.
Intoxicated by kāma,
people run after pleasures
and fall like drunks in ditches.

15 What's death but a tiger
stuffed full of straw
to the man undeceived
by desire? Abandon,
O Kṣatriya, selfishness,
and snuff out desire.

16 The innermost ātman
is nothing but death,
when deluded by anger
and greed. And death
has no fear for the knower
of this truth about death.
Death dies before him,
in the sense all mortals
die sooner or later.

17 “They say that the twice-born,”
Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
“with yajñas and rituals
reach celestial realms.
Why then should a wise man
abstain from action?”

18 “The Vedas applaud
the value of yajñas;
the celestial realms
are reached by the unwise.
The desireless doer
is the man who is free:
the path of this man
is the path that unites
to the ātman-beyond.”

19 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked:
“The eternal and unborn –
the ātman-beyond –
you say is united
with the ātman-within.
Explain this to me.
How does this happen?
What is its karma?
What joy does it get?”

20 “Things different in essence
cannot wholly unite,”
said Sanat-sujāta.
“Creation arises
from relative conditions.
The eternal and unborn
remains undiminished,
though humans are born
from relative conditions.

21 The Ultimate Lord
produces the worlds
with the yoga-of-change.
The Vedas attest
to this power-of-yoga
that makes evolution.”

22 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked:
"Some practise dharma,
some violate dharma.
Can dharma destroy
its opposite, or is it
itself destroyed?"

23 Sanat-sujāta replied:
"Dharma has fruits;
so has its opposite.
Both form the process of change.

24 But the wise find success
with the help of knowledge.
The others depend
on the fruits of the body;
they fall from success
again and again.

25 Obtaining the fruits
of good and bad karma,
they die and are reborn.
The wise man is able
to purify dharma
with the help of knowledge.
Such dharma is strong:
it leads to the absolute
and final perfection."

26 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked:
"It is said that the dharma
of the twice-born provides
the eternal and holy
and celestial regions.
Describe them to me,
and any other regions.
I do not desire
more knowledge of karma."

27 Sanat-sujāta replied: "The Brahmins
who are confident
of their vows, as men of strength
are confident
of their strength, after death shine
in Brahman.

28 The Brahmins who are confident
    of their dharma
as the culmination of their knowledge,
    achieve heaven.

29 Some Veda-knowers hold that practice
    of rituals is essential.
They stress the externals.
    Ignore them.

30 A Brahmin should avoid mortification,
    and live in a place
where food and drink abound,
    like grass in the rainy season.

31 In a place where not to praise one's excellence
    is dangerous,
the man who does not praise himself
    excels the man who does.

32 Good men recommend the food
    that is offered by a man
who is not hurt by seeing another
    glorify himself,
and who eats only after sharing food
    with Brahmins.

33 Brahmins who glorify themselves
    are like dogs
licking their own vomit.
    They only make themselves worse.

34 That man deserves to be a Brahmin
    whose good deeds
are not known even to his family –
    the wise say so.

35 What other Brahmin is worthy
    of knowing the formless,
changeless, symbol-less, always-one,
    innermost ātman?

36 By this means even a Kṣatriya
Can see Brahman in himself.

37 What thief if worse
than the ātman-swindler
who thinks that the ātman
has form and feeling?

38 A Brahman-knowing Brahmin is he
who is relaxed,
accepts no gifts, who is wise without
giving the impression
he is wise, and who is respected
by the discerning.

39 The poor-in-world are the rich-in-heaven;
it is hard
to defeat them, they are fearless;
they are Brahma-like.

40 The ritual-performer who attains the gods
cannot equal
the Brahman-knower,
just because he physically struggles.

41 The unstruggling man, when honoured,
is really honoured.
He should not feel honoured,
nor regret being not honoured.

42 If a man is honoured, let him think:
it is as natural
as the opening and shutting of an eyelid
for the learned to honour.

43 The fools, who in their māyā
are adepts at adharma,
will not honour the honourable;
rather, they insult him.

44 *Māna* and *mauna* cannot co-exist;
self-importance and the vow of silence
are irreconcilable.
The wise know
that *māna* is for this world,
*mauna* for out-of-this.

45 The goddess of prosperity Śri
gives joy in this world, O Kṣatriya,
though not without problems.
Brāhmī, the goddess of wisdom,
gives the perfect serenity
that follows self-realisation.

46 The saints have declared
there are several doors
that dissipate delusion
and are difficult to enter:
truth, kindness, humility,
discipline, purity, knowledge.

## SECTION FORTY-THREE

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked:
"What's the nature of *manua*,
the state of silence?
Of the two kinds of *mauna* –
not-speaking, meditating –
which one is better?
Can the learned attain
the Ultimate with *mauna*?
How is *mauna* achieved?"

2 "What the mind and the Vedas,"
said Sanat-sujata,
"are unable to fathom
is *mauna*. Our words, O rājā,
and the words of the Vedas
have their source in *mauna*."

3 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked: "Can ill deeds
stain a man
who is learned in the Ṛg, Yajur,
and Sāma-Vedas?"

4 Sanat-sujāta replied:
"I will not lie to you:
Neither Ṛg, Yajur, nor Sāma
redeem bad karma.

5 The songs of the Vedas
cannot redeem
the māyā-deceived.
Like newly-fldged birds
forsaking their nest,
they desert such a man."

6 "If the Vedas cannot save a man
who has no dharma,"
asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra, "why have Brahmins
always believed otherwise?"

7 "Magnanimous monarch,"
said Sanat-sujāta,
"the Vedas declare
this universe is born
from the Ultimate Essence;
they also declare
that names, forms, and shapes
that constitute matter
are distinct from the Essence.

8 Tapasyā and yajñas
are ways for the learned
to acquire some merit.
That merit assists
in destroying bad karma
and brings illumination.

9 The wise man's knowledge
reveals him the ātman.
Pursuit of the fruits
of material deeds
brings rewards after death
and rebirth in this world.

10 Tapasyā's fruits are enjoyed after death
by the imperfect;
perfect Brahmins know that tapasyā
is its own immediate fruit."

11 "How strange," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra. "O Sanat-sujāta!
Explain to me how tapasyā
brings success in one case,
and unsuccess in the other."

12 Sanat-sujāta replied: "In one case,
tapasyā is pure:
it is its own immediate fruit.
Impure tapasyās bring future fruits.

13 O Kṣatriya! All your questions point
to one root: tapasyā.
Veda-versed men through tapasyā
achieve non-death."

14 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"Tell me about impure tapasyā,
so that I may know
all the eternal mysteries."

15 "The impure tapasyā,"
said Sanat-sujata,
"is the one that is stained
by the twelve defects,
headed by anger, O rājā.
Their counterpart virtues
are thirteen, and these
are known to Brahmins
and also to the *pitṛs.*

16 Anger and kāma,
greed and delusion,
despair and unkindness,
self-importance and vanity,
grief and luxuriousness,
envy and calumny –
these twelve are the basic
defects that humans
should always avoid.

17 Each alone can destroy mankind.
These defects lurk like hunters,
biding their time
to shoot down deer.

18 Defying all fears
of now and the future,
men of ill-dharma
persist in six vices:
self-praise and lasciviousness,
anger and fickleness,
malice and disrespect.

19 The seven most vicious
are: the lustful, the proud,
the charity-regretter,
the exploiter, the miser,
the greedy for affluence,
the hater of his wife.

20 The values most cherished
by Brahmins are: truth,
and dharma, and discipline,
tapasyā, delight
in the welfare of others,
humility, forbearance,
and yajñas, and sympathy,
perseverance, and charity,
and *śruti*-learning – these twelve.

21 The man who excels
in these twelve is enabled
to master the world.
Proficiency even
in one or just two
is conducive to success.

22 Discipline, renunciation and humility –
these give *amṛta*, the nectar of non-death.
Noble-minded Brahmins treat these three
as the face of truth.

23 Self-discipline has eighteen obstacles.
Avoidance of duty and non-duty,
untruthfulness, kāma,
matter-mindedness artha, hedonism,

24 Anger, grief, hankering, greed, deceit,
pleasure in the pain of others,
envy, cruelty, self-pity,
neglect of piety,

25 Forgetfulness of responsibility, gossip,
and pomposity –
the man without these is disciplined,
so good people say.

26 These eighteen vices make up pride.
Renunciation is of six kinds;
their reverse is pride,
declare the *smṛtis.*

27 The six renunciation are excellent.
The third is hard to practise;
it frees from sorrow,
and gives serenity.

28 The six renunciations are excellent.
The first is: not delighting in prosperity;
the second:
not delighting in yajñas and rituals;

29 The third is: renunciation of kāma.
The *smṛtis,* O Indra-among-rājās,
say this is indescribable.
It is considered the highest virtue.

30 It involves renunciation of pleasures
without indulging in them,
and renouncing them after
enjoying them.

31 Not to repent over failure,
to renounce grief over failure,
though one deserved success –
is the fourth renunciation.

32 It includes renouncing pain
if an unpleasant experience occurs.
The fifth is
expecting favours from son or wife.

33 The sixth is renouncing the delight
of giving unsolicited gifts
to the deserving.
Renunciation provides serenity.
It provides a man
with the eight guṇa-virtues:

34 Truth, meditation, philosophical discrimination,
decisiveness,
detachment, brahmacarya, non-stealing,
non-gift-expecting.

35 So much for *dama* which is discipline;
and *mada*, pride.
The seeker of freedom should know
these distinctions.

36 The eight defects associated with pride
should be avoided.
The man who achieves detachment
from his senses
and from hope and nostalgia
is the man who finds felicity.

37 O Indra-among-rājās!
Make firm your ātman in truth;
truth makes firm the universe.
Discipline, renunciation, and knowledge
are all firm in truth,
and truth makes non-death possible.

38 Remove all defects,
and practise vows and tapasyā.
The Creator has ordained truth
as the vow of good men.

39 Only tapasyā that avoids these defects
and gathers these virtues
can be said to have achieved
its purpose.

40 I have explained briefly the wisdom
that takes one
beyond vice and virtue,
birth, death, and decay."

41 “I have heard that the fifth Veda,”
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
“is revered by some. Some revere four Vedas,
others only three.

42 Some, in fact, revere two;
others simply one.
Which of these should I consider
the true twice-born Brahmin?”

43 Sanat-sujāta replied:
“It’s ignorance of the Vedas
that says there are many Vedas.
O Indra-among-rājās,

44 Not knowing the real Veda,
man thinks he is wise.
Self-seeking makes him give gifts,
makes him study, perform yajñas.

45 Such people are far from the truth.
They follow the literal Vedas,
and their nature makes them
perform yajñas.

46 Some perform yajñas with mind, others with speech,
and others with karma.
But only the truth-knower
really succeeds.

47 The man who falters should take
the *dīkṣita*-vow of silence.
*Dīkṣa* is the root-word,
meaning perseverance
in vow-observance.
The good follow only truth.

48 Knowledge brings immediate results,
tapasyā brings later results.
A well-read Brahmin is nothing more
than a well-read reader.

49 Don’t consider a widely-read man
as a true Brahmin.
Only the man steady in truth
is the true Brahmin.

50 What Atharvan recited
in the past to mahā-ṛṣis
are known as 'the Songs'.
The Vedas are dark
to those who proceed
with study of the Vedas,
but do not grasp
the Ultimate Truth
that is sung by the Vedas.

51 These songs are the means
to arrive at the truth
that is outside the songs.
These songs have no meaning
to those who indulge
in mechanical rituals.

52 Some know the Vedas, O rājā,
some do not know the Vedas:
Those who know the Vedas
do not know the Vedas.
Those firm in truth
are those who know the Vedas.

53 No knowledge is known
by the knowing of the senses.
The mind cannot know
that which should be known.
Who knows what is knowledge
knows what should be known.
Who confuses knowledge
with what should be known
has no knowledge of truth.

54 The Veda-knower knows
that which should be known,
which is outside the Vedas
and outside of knowledge.
It is possible for Brahmins
who know the Vedas
to know the should-be-known
that is cutside the Vedas,
with the help of the Vedas.

55 The Vedas are used
to point to the truth
of the Primal Ātman,
like a twig that is used
to point to the moon
in the bright fortnight.

56 I call him a Brahmin who is not bewildered,
who knows
the inner wisdom
and can remove others' doubts.

57 That inner wisdom cannot be found
in west, east, north, south,
or in the intermediary points –
or horizontally.

58 That wisdom is not in identifying things
with non-things;
the Vedas cannot give it;
It comes through tapasyā.

59 Try your hardest to subdue your senses:
focus your mind in silence,
and discover the inner ātman
that is Brahman.

60 Neither he who keeps the vow of silence,
nor the man who lives by words,
can really be considered
*munis.*
The real *muni* is the man
who knows his own nature.

61 The grammarian is he who traces
the roots of words.
The real grammarian knows the root
of the roots of words.

62 The man who sees all the worlds
has universal vision;
the Brahman-knower who knows truth
knows all there is to know.

63 A Kṣatriya can see Brahman
by practising such dharma
and abiding by the Vedas.
You have my word for this."

## SECTION FORTY-FOUR

1 "O Sanat-kumāra,"
Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
"What excellent words
you speak on the nature
of the worlds and of Brahman!
Expound to me more
on the subjects that men
who have kāma find hard
to know and achieve."

2 "The Brahman you mention
with soaring delight,"
said Sanat-sujata,
"is not to be grasped
by men in a hurry.
When the intellect guides
the whimsical mind,
brahmacarya establishes
the pathway to knowledge."

3 "The knowledge you say
brahmacarya provides
is eternally present,
and requires no stimulus
or steady pursuit,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
"So how can you say
that non-death's achieved
by struggling for Brahman?"

4 "The knowledge I speak of,"
said Sanat-sujata,
"is dormant, and flowers

through strict brahmacarya.
Obtaining this knowledge
means leaving this world.
This knowledge is known
to gurus and elders
and entrusted to them."

5 "What kind of brahmacarya is it,"
asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra, "O Brahmin,
that makes such knowledge available?
Explain this to me."

6 "Those who enter the homes
of ācāryas and serve them,"
said Sanat-sujāta,
"with strict brahmacarya,
abandon their bodies
and unite with the Ultimate.

7 Those who live in this world
and seek for a union
with Brahman, shed kāma.
Their ātmans disjoin
from their bodies, like grassblades
from marshy swamps.

8 The body is born
of father and mother;
a new birth is given
by the teacher – a birth
that is holy, untouched
by old age and death.

9 He frees from untruth
and gives the supreme,
he is the giver of *amṛta*,
he is father and mother.
His status being such,
he should never be harmed.

10 A disciple should daily
honour his guru
with total attention,
and feel no annoyance.
This is brahmacarya's
primary requirement.

11 The disciple who practises purity
through service
has taken the first step
in the vow of brahmacarya.

12 The disciple who gives devotion and wealth,
in mind, deed, and speech
pleasing his ācārya,
takes the second step.

13 The same attitude should be shown
to his guru's wife and son.
This is also part
of the second step.

14 Recalling the good
his ācārya has done
for the sake of his ātman,
he should joyfully think,
*I have grown in his care.*
This is brahmacarya's third step

15 The wise man should not leave
the house of his guru
without his permission,
nor should he think:
*I am giving the gift*
This is brahmacarys fourth step.

16 Time itself will lead
to initial success.
A guru will lead
to further success.
And confident effort
will further improve

the disciple; discussion
with others will lead
to further achievement.

17 The twelve constituents
of effort are *aṅgas*,
dharma being the thirteenth.
Untiring energy
or *bala* is needed.
The ācārya supplies this.
Such is the yoga
of Brahman-discovery
thorough strict brahmacarya.

18 Whatever is earned
by disciples belongs
to the ācārya.
This constitutes
the guru's livelihood,
and that of his son.

19 The practice of this
makes a man prosper;
he gets sons and fame.
He is lavishly honoured,
and thousands seek him
to learn brahmacarya.

20 Such brahmacarya
made the gods divine;
with it mahā-fortune-favoured ṛṣis
attained the realm of Brahmā.

21 It gave beauty to the gandharvas
and apsarās.
This brahmacarya makes the sun
rise in the sky.

22 They completed their brahmacarya
and attained all their desires
like the discoverers
of the various Rasabheda gems.

23 Who uses, O rājā,
the strength of tapasyā
to build brahmacarya
becomes like a child,
and finally conquers
the terror of death.

24 Karma, O Kṣatriya, no matter
how holy, can only
attain the material.
But the learned get Brahman
with the help of knowledge.
Knowledge brings freedom."

25 "What is the shape,"
asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"of the Ultimate Absolute,
which the wise man sees
in this world? Is it white,
red, black, blue, or golden?"

26 "It may seem to be white,
red, black, or golden,"
said Sanat-sujāta,
"but nothing on earth,
on sky, or on sea,
has the form of Brahman.

27 It is not in the stars,
it is not in lightning;
it cannot be found
in the clouds, in the air,
in the moon, in the sun,
among the gods,

28 In the Ṛg, or the Yajur,
in the Sāma, or Atharva;
it cannot be found
in the psalms, O rājā,
the Rathantrara, Bārhadratha,
or in the mahā vows.

29 It cannot be grasped
by the strength of the mind.
It is outside the doom
at the end of Kāla.
It cannot be seen.
As fine as the edge
of a razor, it is vast
like the shape of the vastest
of mountains one sees.

30 It is the base of things; it is *amṛta*;
it is the universe;
it is mighty; it is Brahman.
It is beginning and end.

31 It rises beyond
the play of the opposites;
it reveals itself
in the form of the worlds.
The poets declare
its changeless glory
in their changing words.
It's the strength of the world.
Who knows this, gets *amṛta*."

## SECTION FORTY-FIVE

1 Sanat-sujāta continued:
"Grief, anger, greed, kāma, pride
laziness, delusion,
malice, hankering for profit, infatuation,
jealousy, calumny –

2 These twelve great defects bring ruin
to a man's life.
One succeeds the other,
waiting for its opportunity.
In their clutches, bewildered,
man does vicious deeds.

3

The lover of pleasures,
the haughty, the harsh-tongued,
the garrulous, the scheming,
the malicious – these six
are never contented,
even when successful.

4

The hedonist, the braggart,
the pompous, the niggardly,
the coward, the fop,
the hater of achievers –
these seven are always
considered as scoundrels.

5

A Brahmin's mahā-vows
are twelve – tapasyā,
dharma and truth,
non-jealousy and discipline,
humility and patience,
forbearances, charity,
deep knowledge of *śruti*,
absence of envy,
not judging others.

6

The man who resolutely
observes these twelve vows
commands the whole earth.
The practitioner of one,
or two, will disclaim
exclusive possessiveness.

7

Self-control, renunciation, dedication –
these provide *amṛta*.
These are qualities of wise Brahmins
devoted to Brahman.

8

To judge others, truly or falsely,
is unworthy of a Brahmin.
Such judges go certainly
to hell.

9 I have not described the eighteen defects
the proceed
from *mada* or pride: hatred of humanity,
actions directed towards destruction,
falsely judging others,
speaking untruths,

10 Kāma, anger, lack of self-reliance,
fault-finding,
scandal, squandering of wealth, quarrelling,
indiscretion, oppression,

11 Envy, ignorance, garrulity,
suppression of one's conscience,
harming others. The wise eschew pride,
which brings disasters.

12 The virtues of friendship
are six: delight
at the prosperity of friends:
and pain when adversity
aflicts them; and pleasure
in giving when asked

13 (To a perfect friend
one happily gives oneself,
or one's wealth, son,
even one's wife);
and living alone
when all has been given;
and not expecting
recompense from a friend;
if required, giving all.

14 The sāttvika man who is capable
of such selflessness
must first withdraw his five senses
from sensual objects.

15 Tapasyā is the cultivation
of such noble qualities.
People who practise it
obtain what they desire.

16 Different people see
the nature of truth differently.
Some do mind-yajña, others speech-yajña,
others karma-yajña.

17 Excellent is a person with desires,
more excellent the person without.
Most excellent of all
is the Brahman-knower.

18 This magnificent wisdom
should only be told
to seekers of Brahman.
This is Yoga-philosophy.
All else is irrelevant.
Whatever exists,
is based on this truth.
The person who knows this
attains non-death.

19 The noblest karma
is insufficient for truth.
So are ritual deeds, O rājā.
The immature adult
is also unable, O rājā,
to find the true peace.

20 Control all the senses,
and steadfastly seek Brahman.
Relax the mind; transcend joy and anger,
praise and blame.

21 Live in this manner, and follow, O Kṣatriya,
the advice of the Vedas where relevant –
and see Brahman.
Listen to me, O learned one."

## SECTION FORTY-SIX

1 Sanat-sujāta continued:
"The Divine Seed blazes
with an intense radiance:
it is fiercely famous;
the gods worship it;
the sun shines with its splendour;
and yogis see
in that radiance
the presence of the eternal.

2 Brahmā creates with that Seed,
Brahmā grows with it.
It enters bodies,
and glows with light and heat.
Yogis see in that radiance
the presence of the eternal.

3 The five subtle elements
emerged from Brahmā;
the five gross elements
from them made the body.
In the skyey inter-space
are the twin gods.
But the Sun of the sun,
the base of the earth
and the sky, is Brahman.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

4 The Seed is the sustenance
of the twin gods,
of heaven and earth,
the points of the earth
and the sky. From the Seed
came the marvellous oceans.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

5 The body's a chariot,
its destination uncertain;
certain are the moving wheels of its karma.
The wise man drives

the steeds of the senses to the realm of the Unborn.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

6 It form is unique;
no eyes can see it;
the wise can perceive it
with mind or the heart;
and those who perceive it
discover non-death.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

7 The Seed makes a lake,
guarded by the gods, terrible to see;
it has twelve tastes –
ten senses, mind and intellect;
man plays in its waters
of enchantment.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

8 For half a month the bee hovers
over flowers,
the other half she sucks honey;
so the lord of the body
does karma in this world –
and returns.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

9 Without plumes, he gathers plumes,
and perches flapping
in an *aśvattha*-tree of golden leaves,
before flying away:
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

10 From fullness comes fullness;
fullness enters into fullness;
take fullness from fullness,
what remains is fullness.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

11 And the wind is born from it,
and flows into it;
so do Agni and Soma,
and the world of creatures.

12 Whatever is, is born from that –
that should be known.
Yogis see in that radiance
the presence of the eternal.

13 In-breach merges with breath;
breath with the moon;
moon with the sun;
and sun with that Ultimate.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

14 The *haṁsa*-swan stands
in the lake of the world,
one foot invisible,
symbolising death and non-death.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

15 The innermost ātman,
the size of a thumb,
moves with the body.
But fools do not see
the adorable ātman
who is lord of the body.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

16 It is present in men
who have knowledge, and those
who have not; it is present
in those who have *amṛta*
and those who have not.
The difference is this –
for those who are free,
it flows in a thick,
honey-sweet stream.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

17 To the man who has knowledge,
both worlds are accessible;
without doing the rituals,
he obtains their fruits.
May such knowledge be yours!
May serenity be yours!
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

18

Such is the mahātmā Puruṣa in whose radiance
all creatures merge.
He who knows that Purusa
has found fulfilment.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

19

Whatever scatters away in a multitudinous
susurrus of wings
must come and repose in the centre
of centres.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

20

The eye cannot see it;
those who live purely
have a glimpse of its truth.
The wisher of welfare
for the world never grieves;
he attains *amṛta.*
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

21

Like snakes in their holes,
some cover their motives
with pretences of goodness.
The ignorant, deceived
by motions of goodness,
are led to destruction.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

22

*I am free of decay,*
*free of life, free of death,*
*free of re-birth and* amṛta,
*free of truth and untruth,*
*right and wrong. I repose*
*in the Ultimate Eternal.*
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

23

What is good and bad
has no meaning for him
who reposes in knowledge.
That man has discovered
the incredible sweetness
of the honey of non-death.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

24 Such a man does not grieve
at insults, or lack
of learning or ritual.
Such a man has the knowledge
that builds up serenity
that constitutes wisdom.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

25 The man who sees the ātman
within all creatures –
how can he grieve?
Grief is for those who do not see.

26 A well is as good as a pool.
The man who knows his ātman
has no need
of all the Vedas.

27 The mahātmā Puruṣa,
of the size of a thumb,
who dwells in the heart –
he cannot be seen.
Unborn, he is active,
he works day and night.
To the poet who sees
that innermost truth,
felicity comes.

28 *I am the grandfather,*
*the father and mother,*
*I am the son, the ātman of all,*
*what is and what is not.*

29 *I am the grandfather,*
*the father and mother,*
*you rest in my ātman,*
*but you are not me, nor I you.*

30 *The ātman's my rest,*
*the ātman my birth,*
*for I am the warp*
*and the woof of the worlds.*
*I am not destroyed.*
*Though birthless, I wander*

*alert, day and night.*
*The poets who see me*
*discover felicity.*

31 It is subtler than the subtlest,
it is awake in all creatures.
The wise know him
as the father of all,
the lovely lotus
of the world's creatures.

SECTION FORTY-SEVEN

1 And so, talking to wise Vidura
and Sanat-sujāta,
the rājā (continued Vaiśampāyana)
passed that night.

2 Next morning, all the rājās came
to the sabhā,
with eager anticipation of a meeting
with the Sūta.

3 Led by Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
they filled the splendid rāja-sabhā,
to hear the dharma-and-artha-filled words
of the Pāṇḍavas.

4 The sabhā was large and dazzling white;
its floor had a golden sheen;
moon-lovely,
wet with sandal-water.

5 It was decorated with exquisite seats
of gold, wood,
marble, and ivory,
with luxurious cushions on them.

6 Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, Śalya, Kṛtavarman, Jayadratha,
Aśvatthāman, Vikarṇa, Somadatta, Bāhlīka,

7 Mahā-wise Vidura, the mahā-chariot-warrior Yuyutsu,–
All these magnificent heroes, O bull-brave Bharata,

8 Led by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, entered the auspicious sabhā,
With Duḥśāsana, Citrasena, and Subala's son Śakuni,

9 Durmukha, Duḥsaha, Karṇa, Ulūka, Viviṁśati,
Headed by the tempestuous Kuru rājā Duryodhana.

10 They entered the sabhā like the gods
behind Śakra-Indra.

11 The sabhā looked like a den
populated by lions.
The mahā-bowmen of magnificent feats
entered the sabhā

12 And sat down on the different seats
like an array of dazzling suns.
O Bharata descendant!
They relaxed, and heard

13 The gate-keeper announce the entry
of the Sūta's son:
"The chariot despatched to the Pāṇḍavas
has returned!

14 The swift Sindhu horses have brought back
our envoy!"
The ear-ringed messenger Sañjaya
quickly alighted
from the chariot and entered the sabhā
of mahātmā earth-lords.

15 "I return from my mission with the Pāṇḍavas,"
he said.
"The Pāṇḍavas send appropriate respects
to all the Kauravas.

16 They honour the elderly,
they pūjā-respect their same-aged;
they greet the younger ones,
according to the custom.

17 Instructed by Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
I approached the Pāṇḍavas
and conveyed the message as advised.
Listen to the dharma-filled reply
of Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna."

## SECTION FORTY-EIGHT

1 "Convey to us, Sañjaya,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"the words of mahātmā
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, leader
in battle and router
of ill-ātmaned men."



2 And Sañjaya replied:
Duryodhana should listen
to the words mahātmā Arjuna,
with Yudhiṣṭhira's permission,
in Keśava-Krishna's presence,
entrusted to me.

3 Diademed Arjuna,
fearless and valiant,
in Vāsudeva-Krishna's presence,
advised me: "Inform
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
and the Kaurava heroes,

4 In the presence of Karṇa,
the ill-ātmaned, foul mouthed
son of a Sūta,
whose ruin is near,
who stupidly wishes
to battle with me,

5 In the presence of rājās
who all have assembled
to war with the Pāṇḍavas –
repeat all my words;
to the king and his courtiers
convey my message."

6 As the gods pay heed
to the rājā of the gods,
thunder-wielding Indra,
the Srñjayas and Pāṇḍavas
listened to eloquent
Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

7 And Arjuna, the wielder
of the Gāṇḍīva, eager
for battle, his eyes
pink like a lotus,
announced: If Duryodhana
will not return our kingdom,

8 The reason is clear:
Some bad karma remains
whose fruits will be tasted
by Duryodhana in the battle
with Arjuna and Bhīma,
with the twins and Krishna,

9 With the grandson of Śini,
with brave Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
with Śikhaṇḍin, and Yudhiṣṭhira
who is Indra's equal
and whose power can destroy
both heaven and earth.

10 If Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
wants battle with these,
the goal of the Pāṇḍavas
is won! So refrain
from proposals of peace.
Let war decide.

11 The bed of distress
the follower-of-dharma
Yudhiṣṭhira slept on
in the forest – a bed
of greater distress
will be dead Duryodhana's.

[V:48:12-17]

Transcreated by P. Lal

12 The ill-ātmaned son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra failed
to equal Yudhiṣṭhira
in humility, knowledge,
tapasyā, and valour,
dharma, guṇa and wealth.

13 The gentle and trusting,
disciplined believer
in dharma-based might,
the man of taṗasyā,
Yudhiṣṭhira was tricked
into sordid sufferings.

14 When the eldest Pāṇḍava
with disciplined ātman,
will focus his slow-
accumulating anger,
the son of Duryodhana
will regret the great war.

15 Like a fire that rages
in summer and burns
dry grass in a forest,
the ranks of Duryodhana
will burn with one angry
glance from Yudhiṣṭhira.

16 When Duryodhana sees Bhīma
brandishing his mace
in his chariot, and spilling
the poisonous wrath
of a Pāṇḍava who's roused,
repentance will come.

17 When proud Duryodhana
sees steel-armoured Bhīma
advancing unscathed
through the Kauravas' ranks,
and slaughtering the Kauravas,
and despatching their corpses
to Antaka-Yama,
he will remember
the words I have spoken.

18 When Duryodhana sees Bhīma
attacking and felling
hill-elephants whose heads
split open like pots
and blood gushes out,
repentance will come.

19 When Duryodhana sees Bhīma
advance like a mahā-lion
on a herd of cattle,
wielding his mace,
and hideous to look at,
repentance will come.

20 When the utterly fearless
and expert in weapons,
the slayer of armies,
careens on his chariot
scattering havoc
among soldiers and chariots,

21 And trapping the elephants
with nooses of rope;
when Bhīma the woodcutter
slices the soldier-trees
of Duryodhana,
repentance will come.

22 When he sees his warriors
consumed by fire
like straw-thatched huts,
or sizzling like corn-fields
struck by lightning,
repentance will come.

23 When the leaders are killed
and the soldiers in panic
flee from the field,
consumed, as it were,
by the weapons of Bhīma,
repentance will come.

24 When Nakula, the hero
in chariot, discharges
multitudinous arrows
that visibly decimate
the enemy's ranks,
repentance will come.

25 For Nakula, accustomed
to comfort, was forced
to sleep in the woods;
when he strikes for revenge
like a venomous snake,
repentance will come.

26 The desperate rulers
of the earth, under orders
from Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
will ruthlessly slaughter
from dazzling-white chariots.
Duryodhana will repent.

27 When the Kauravas see
five young-looking Pāṇḍavas,
mature in their deeds,
unmercifully shattering
the ranks of their enemies,
repentance will come.

28 When Sahadeva, driving
his excellent chariot
to the right destination –
the golden-starred chariot –
when he slices kings' heads
with numerous arrows,

29 When fearful Sahadeva,
expert in weapons,
erect in his chariot,
scatters his enemies
in every direction,
repentance will come.

30 When soft-spoken Sahadeva,
skilful and truthful,
proficient in dharmas,
efficient, mahā-powerful,
destroys all the soldiers
of Śakuni in battle;

31 When Draupadī's sons,
all experts in weapons,
superb chariot-heroes,
harass their foes
like venomous snakes,
repentance will come.

32 When the slayer-of-foes
Abhimanyu shoots arrows
as clouds pour rain,
and, with skill like Krishna's,
subdues all his enemies,
repentance will come.

33 When the son of Subhadrā
who, though only a boy,
is valiant like Indra,
descends on his foes
like Death personified,
repentance will come.

34 When Prabhadraka youths,
who are powerful like lions
and expert in warfare,
descend on Duryodhana
with stupendous savagery,
repentance will come.

35 When Virāṭa and Drupada,
the mahā-chario-heroes,
from separate positions.
assail all the Kauravas
with the brunt of their armies
repentance will come.

36 When charioted Drupada,
expert in weapons,
annihilates the young
Kaurava heroes
with fierce arrow-showers,
repentance will come.

37 When the slayer-of-heroes
Virāṭa succeeds
in piercing the ranks,
and his Matsya warriors
spread ruin and havoc,
repentance will come.

38 When the son of Virāṭa,
the king of the Matsyas,
is seen on the field
arrayed in mail
on the side of the Pāṇḍavas,
repentance will come.

39 When Śāntanu's son,
the virtuous Bhīṣma,
is killed on the field
by Śikhaṇḍin, our foes
will discover their doom.
I speak the truth.

40 When Śikhaṇḍin, in chariot,
protected by heroes,
encounters Bhīṣma
after piercing the ranks
of Kaurava chariots,
repentance will come.

41 When Duryodhana observes,
at the head of the Sṛñjayas,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna, resplendent
in the skills he was taught
by Droṇa himself,
repentance will come.

42 When the leader of armies
Dhṛṣṭadyumna proceeds
to destroy all the Kauravas,
and challenges Droṇa
to open combat,
repentance will come.

43 Which foes can survive
the attacks of an army
that is led by this lion,
a Somaka chief,
who is humble and wise,
and powerful and prosperous?

44 Say this to Duryodhana:
Forget your enjoyments.
The valiant Sātyaki,
unequalled for prowess,
superb chariot-hero,
has become our ally.

45 Long-armed and broad-chested,
an expert in weapons,
valiant Sātyaki,
the grandson of Śini,
is fearless; his bow
measures four cubits.

46 When Sātyaki, the chief
of the Śinis, advised
by me, will assail
the Kauravas with arrows
that descend like a rain-storm,
repentance will come.

47 When Sātyaki the long-armed
mahātmā, with bow,
determines to fight,
his enemies will scatter
like cattle that smell
the scent of a lion.

48 Sātyaki mahātmā,
the long-armed hero,
can mangle shatter a mountain,
or ruin the worlds;
he is dexterous; he shines
like the sun in the sky.

49 This Yādava descendant,
this lion of the Vṛṣṇis
is enormously skilled.
The yoga of weapons
is his; and he has
all the known virtues.

50 When he sees the golden
four-horsed chariot
of Sātyaki, descendant
of the race of Madhu,
repentance will come
to foolish Duryodhana.

51 When he sees my chariot,
driven by Keśava-Krishna,
pulled by white horses,
and glittering with gems,
and flying the flag
of the monkey-symbol,
repentance will come
to the foolish, ill-doing
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

52 When foolish Duryodhana
hears the twang of the Gāṇḍīva,
produced by the pull
of my leather-covered fingers
on the string of the bow –
a thunderous roar –

53 And he sees he is helpless,
his soldiers all killed
or fleeing like cattle
when swarms of arrows
descend upon them,
repentance will come.

54 When he sees the gruesome
shower of arrows,
of beautiful feathers,
shot from the Gāṇḍīva,
and able to pierce
the innermost vitals,

55 As they wing through the sky
like flashes of lightning
shooting from clouds,
mutilating elephants
and caparisoned horses,
repentance will come.

56 When foolish Duryodhana
sees how I counter
my enemies' arrows
with special devices
of twining and blocking,
repentance will come.

57 When my *vipāṭha*-arrows
slice the heads
of Kaurava youths
like birds that devour
the fruits of a tree,
repentance will come.

58 When he sees how his warriors
topple off their chariots,
when he sees how my arrows
massacre elephants
on the field of battle,
repentance will come.

59 When he sees how the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra collapse,
though standing outside
the range of our weapons,
unable to fight back,
repentance will come.

60 When my arrows of fire
like wide-jawed death
consume all my enemies,
the Kaurava soldiers,
the chariot heroes,
repentance will come.

61 When he finds his army
disfigured by the dust
that is raised by my chariot,
and destroyed by my Gāṇḍīva,
repentance will come
to that ill-thinking fool.

62 When he sees all his soldiers
mauled and mutilated,
his horses cut down,
his generals killed,
his followers fearful
and panting for water,

63 And the battlefield filled
with the piteous wailing
of the dead and the dying,
and the flesh and the bones
and the heads of his soldiers
all scattered to show
the Creator's karma,
repentance will come
to the ill-thinking fool.

64 When he sees in my chariot
my Gāṇḍīva-bow,
the inexhaustible quivers,
myself and my horses,
the celestial conch
Pāñcajanya of Krishna,
my own conch Devadatta,
repentance will come
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son.

65 When the Kauravas perish
in the fire of my anger,
like the end of a yuga

and the birth of another,
repentance will come
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his sons.

66 Dispossessed of his wealth,
having lost all his brothers,
his soldiers and followers
denuded of pride,
repentance will come
to shivering Duryodhana.

67 I remember one day,
my meditation over,
as I rose from the waters,
a Brahmin said, "Your karma,
Savyasācī-Arjuna,
is to fight your foes.

68 And Indra will help you
with the might of his thunder
to slaughter your foes;
and Krishna protect you
from behind with Sugrīva
and other horses."

69 I prefer Vāsudeva-
Krishna to Indra,
the thunderbolt-wielder.
The gods have ordained
the Krishna will help me
in killing these scoundrels.

70 Without fighting, he wins
whom Krishna helps,
though the Indra-led gods
be ranged against him.
In the case of mortals,
there is nothing to fear.

71 The man who has hopes
of vanquishing Krishna,
son of Vasudeva,
is the man who has hopes
of swimming an ocean
with his bare arms.

72 The man who attempts
to slap down a mountain
of massive proportions
finds his nails and his hand
smashed into pulp,
the mountain unharmed.

73 Who tries to humiliate
Vāsudeva-Krishna
in battle, is the man
who would forcibly rob
the gods of their *amṛta*,
is the man who would try
to extinguish a fire
with his hands, or imprison
the sun and the moon.

74 It was Krishna, alone
in his chariot, who conquered
the armies of Bhoja,
who married the lovely
Rukmiṇi, whose son
is mahātmā Pradyumna.

75 It was Krishna, beloved
of the gods, who defeated
the Gāndhāras and routed
Nagnajit's sons,
and freed the captured
king Sudarśana,

76 And striking the chest
of the ruler of Pāṇḍava,
he killed that king;
he smashed the Kaliṅgas.
He burnt Vārāṇasi,
leaving it desolate.

77 The invincible rājā
Ekalavya of Niṣāda,
who challenged Krishna,
was fatally struck
like Jambha the anti-god
crushed on a hill.

78 With Balarāma helping,
it was Krishna who killed
the despicable son
of king Ugrasena,
and handed the kingdom
back to Ugrasena.

79 He fought the horrendous
rājā named Śālva,
the ruler of Saubha,
and remained unaffected.
by the māyā of Śālva.
He caught in his hands
the fierce fire-missile
near the gateway of Saubha.
Who dares to fight Krishna?

80 The anti-gods boasted
of their fortress Prāgjyotiṣa –
enormous, invincible –
where earth's son Naraka
hid the earrings stolen
from beautiful Āditi.

81 The gods, with Śakra-
Indra as leader,
fearless of death,
were unable to rout him.
They realised the power
of Keśava-Krishna's weapons.

82 And knowing his nature,
they sought his assistance
to vanquish that scoundrel.
That difficult task
was accepted by Krishna
as one of his feats.

83 He massacred six thousand
near the city Nirmocana;
with sharp-pointed arrows
he killed Mura and other
belligerent rākṣasas,
and entered Nirmocana.

84 It was there that a fierce
encounter took place
between mahā-powerful Naraka
and Viṣṇu incarnate.
And Naraka toppled
like a *karṇikāra* tree.

85 After killing the earth's
son Naraka, and Mura,
and retrieving the earrings,
the radiant and learned
unparalleled warrior
Krishna returned.

86 The gods who had witnessed
his remarkable feats
gave him boons with these words:
"You will fight tireless;
no power in the sky
or water shall stop you;

87 Now weapons will harm
your radiant body."
And Krishna was pleased.
These are the virtues
of Vasudeva's incomparable
mahā-powerful son.

88 Duryodhana has hopes
he can conquer this Viṣṇu,
whose glory's invincible.
He is always alert
to harm Krishna, but Krishna
endures this for our sake.

89 He thinks he will find
a way of fomenting
disunion between us
and Krishna. The truth
will be clear on the field
on the day of the battle.

90 On the eve of the battle
to recover my kingdom,
I will namaskāra
Bhīṣma and Droṇa,
and the son of Droṇa,
and Śaradvat's son.

91 I am convinced it is dharma
to kill the ill-minded
ruler Duryodhana.
We were sons of a rājā,
we were cheated at dice
and then, for twelve years,

92 We survived in the forest
in perilous exile,
the last year spent
in disguise. So long
as the Pāṇḍavas live,
Duryodhana must fear.

93 If Duryodhana succeeds
in defeating us, who
are assisted by Indra
and the gods, then adharma
will triumph over dharma,
and goodness collapse.

94 Duryodhana may think
he can conquer his karma.
The Pāṇḍavas know better.
With Vāsudeva-Krishna helping,
we will defeat Duryodhana
and all his advisers.

95 All our good karma
cannot be fruitless;
all their bad karma
cannot be fruitless.
I am sure Duryodhana
is doomed to defeat.

96 O Kauravas, listen,
and witness my prophecy!
If Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
will not fight, they may live.
If they fight, they are doomed.
Not one will survive.

97 I will kill Karṇa
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,
and recover the kingdom.
In the meantime, enjoy
your lives and your wives
with ephemeral delight.

98 We have elderly Brahmins,
who are learned in *śruti*,
high-born and holy,
who practise astrology
and know how the planets
revolve in their courses,

99 Who have fathomed the secrets
of the gods, and are able
to predict accurately,
by observing the Zodiac,
that the Kurus will lose
and the Pāṇḍavas win.

100 That is why foeless
Yudhiṣṭhira considers
the battle as won.
Janārdana-Krishna, who knows
the events of the future,
can also confirm this.

101 My senses are clear.
They see to the future.
They see what they see,
and do not regret it.
The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
if they fight, will perish.

102 My Gāṇḍīva trembles,
not feeling my touch.
Untouched, it yawns.
My arrows appear
at the rim of my quivers,
ready to slide out.

103 My bright sword emerges
by itself from its scabbard,
like a snake from its skin.
My banners resound
with the challenge: "Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
ready the chariot!"

104 And jackals at night
howl in rejoicing;
from the sky come rākṣasas;
and jackals and deer,
and peacocks and crows,
cranes, vultures, and wolves,

105 And gold-feathered birds
appear and follow
my white-horsed chariot.
I singly can send
to their death all the kings
and Kaurava warriors.

106 Like a fire in summer
consuming a forest,
I shall shoot mahā-missiles
I received from Śakra-Indra –
the *sthūṇa,* the *karṇa,*
the *brāhma*, the *pāśupata.*

107 The power of my fury
will be such that no trace
will remain of my foes.
And then I will savour
a well-deserved peace.
I am firm, Gāvalgaṇa-Sañjaya.

108 Duryodhana's a fool!
He thinks he can vanquish
the invincible ones
who are helped by the gods,
with Indra as leader,
and are always victorious.

109 The venerable Bhīṣma,
Śāntanu's son,
Kṛpa and Droṇa,
Droṇa's son, wise Vidura –
what they say, will be done.
May the Kauravas live long.

## SECTION FORTY-NINE

1 The son of Śāntanu, Bhīṣma
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
said to Duryodhana
in the presence of the rājās:

2 Once Bṛhaspati and Indra
went to Brahmā.
Accompanying Indra were the Maruts,
Agni, the Vasus,

3 The Ādityas, Sādhyas,
the seven celestial ṛṣis,
the Viśvāvasus, the gandharvas,
and the enchanting apsarās.

4 They namaskāra-ed the ancient
Pitāmaha world-grandfather;
the dwellers of heaven sat around
the universal lord.

5 The ṛṣis Nara and Nārāyaṅa, ancient gods,
as if pulled into themselves
the others' energies,
and left.

6 Bṛhaspati asked Brahmā:
"Who are these two
who dare to leave without honouring you?
Tell me, Pitamāha."

7 Brahmā replied: "These radiant ṛṣis of tapasyā,
whose glory illuminates
heaven and earth
and who are mahā-powerful,

8 Are Nara and Nārāyaṇa,
come here briefly from earth.
Their tapasyā and fortitude
are truly mahā-resplendent.

9 Their deeds have brought happiness
to the worlds.
They are mahā-learned, they crush their enemies,
O Brahmin.
Pūjā-respected by gods and gandharvas,
they destroy anti-gods."

10 Śakra-Indra heard this and went to where
the two were absorbed in tapasyā;
with him were Bṛhaspati
and all the gods.

11 It so happened that at that time
conflicts raged
between the gods and anti-gods,
so Indra and the gods
asked a boon from the mahātmās
Nara and Nārāyaṇa.

12 The two replied : "Choose a boon."
O excellent Bharata,
Śakra-Indra said to the two ṛṣis:
"Help us."

13 The two said: "We will do
as you ask."
With their help, Śakra-Indra defeated
the Daityas and Dānavas.

14 Foe-crushing Nara killed hundreds of thousands
of Indra's enemies,
among them Paulomas
and Kālakhañjas.

15 It was Nara-Arjuna who,
from his speeding chariot,
sliced yawning Jambha's head
with a broad-headed *bhalla*-arrow.

16 He slaughtered sixty thousand Nivātakavacas,
and overran
the golden city Hiraṇyapura
on the ocean's other side.

17 It was Nara-Arjuna,
the obliterater of hostile cities,
who pleased the Jātaveda fire-god
by routing the Indra-led gods.

18 Similarly Nārāyaṇa-Krishna killed
innumerable others.
The two mahā-valiant heroes
are inseparably united.

19 Vasudeva's son Krishna, and Arjuna,
both mahā-chariot-heroes,
are Nara-Nārāyaṇa, the two ancient gods.
Everyone knows this.

20 Krishna is Nārāyaṇa,
and Phalguna-Arjuna is Nara:
they are one essence made two.
They cannot be defeated
by anti-gods
or by Indra-led gods.

21 Their karma takes them to eternal,
inexhaustible realms
and in times of crisis they are born
again and again.

22 Their duty is to right wrong.
This is what Nārada,
learned in the Vedas,
said to the Vṛṣṇis.

23 When you see Keśava-Krishna with his conch,
*cakra* and mace,
and Arjuna with his tremendous bow –
both fully armed –

24 Two eternal mahātmās
riding in the same chariot –
then, *tāta*, Duryodhana my child,
remember my words.

25 *Tatā*! Child! You have neglected
both dharma and artha.
What other reason is there
for the decline of the Kauravas?

26 If you ignore my advice,
you will witness
the deaths of your warriors,
who follow you blindly.

27 O bull-brave Bharata,
it seems there are only three people
whose advice affects you –
Karṇa cursed by Paraśurāma –

28 Low-born, wicked-minded Karṇa,
son of a Sūta;
Subala's son Śakuni;
and your vicious brother Duḥśāsana."

29 Karṇa said: "Is it right, Pitāmaha,
to malign me!
I follow Kṣatriya dharma;
I have not broken my own dharma.

30 What horrible deed have I done
to deserve this?
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons have found
nothing vicious in me.

31 I have never harmed Duryodhana
in any way.
I have vowed to kill the Pāṇḍavas
on the battlefield.

32 How can one make peace
with one's inveterate enemies?
I have tried to please rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and also his son Duryodhana,
because he is the kingdom's
sovereign ruler."

33 The son of Śāntanu, Bhīṣma,
heard Karṇa
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and said to mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

34 "He daily announces,
'I will kill all the Pāṇḍavas',
but he is not one-sixteenth
what those mahātmās are.

35 The grisly karma that is going to overtake
your ill-ātmaned sons
is the work of this ill-minded
son of a Sūta.

36 Your weak-willed son Suyodhana-Duryodhana
has leaned on him totally,
and insulted the god-like
Pāṇḍava foe-crushers.

37 Is there any difficult task
that he has accomplished
that equals anything
even a single Pāṇḍava has not done?

38 When he saw his dear brother
killed by Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
in Virāṭa city,
was he able to do anything?

39 When he saw Dhanañjaya-Arjuna charging
upon the Kauravas,
routing them, and stripping them,
what did he do?

40 Where was this brave son of a Sūta
who now bellows like a bull,
when the gandharvas
took your son captive?

41 It took mahātmās Bhīma,
Arjuna, and the twins,
to attack and defeat
the gandharvas.

42 He is given to boasting hugely,
his words, O bull-brave Bharata, are hollow;
they ignore dharma-and-artha.
May you prosper!"

43 Mahā-minded Droṇa, Bharadvāja's son,
heard Bhīṣma
and addressed Dhṛtarāṣṭra
after duly pūjā-respecting him:

44 "What the finest-of-the-Bharatas Bhīṣma says,
do it, O king.
It is not right that you encourage
lovers of kāma-and-artha.

45 Make peace with the Pāṇḍavas
before the battle begins.
The predictions of Arjuna
that Sañjaya has communicated

46 Will all be executed
by the son of Pāṇḍu, Arjuna.
No bow-wielder in the three worlds
equals him."

47 But the rājā ignored the words
of Bhīṣma and Droṇa
and asked Sañjaya
about the Pāṇḍavas

48 When rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra refused to listen
to Bhīṣma and Droṇa,
the Kauravas began to fear
for their lives.

SECTION FIFTY

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked:
"What did the son of Dharma,
the rājā of the Pāṇḍavas,
have to say to you
when he heard that large-armies
had joined ours?

2 What preparations is Yudhiṣṭhira making
for the battle, O Sūta?
Which of his sons and brothers
have full faith in him?

3 Which of them tries to argue him
out of war?
Yudhiṣṭhira knows and follows dharma,
but is now blinded by anger."

4 Sañjaya replied: "All the Pāñcālas and Pāṇḍavas
look up
to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's face trustingly.
May you prosper!

5 Innumerable chariots of the Pāñcālas
arrive separately
and inspire confidence
in Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

6 The Pāñcālas shine with the glory
of Kuntī's son,
just as the sky reflects
the radiance of the sun.

7 The tribes of cowherds and shepherds,
the ranks of the Pāñcālas and Matsyas –
all repose confidence
in Yudhiṣṭhira.

8 The daughters of Brahmins,
rājās, and Vaiśyas
playfully run up to Yudhiṣṭhira
to inspect his military attire."

9 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said, "Sañjaya,
tell me about those
who are giving him military aid –
Dhṛṣṭadyumna and the Somakas."

10 Sañjaya, questioned in this manner
in the sabhā of the Kurus,
sighed deeply,
and became gravely pensive.

11 Suddenly, without warning,
as if struck down by fate,
he collapsed. Vidura shouted
in that sabhā of rājās:

12 "Mahārāja, Sañjaya has fainted.
He is unable
for the time being
to speak anything coherently."

13 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"Sañjaya must have had
a disturbing vision of the Pāṇḍavas,
those mahā-chariot-hero tigers-among-men."

14 Sañjaya regained consciousness
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and, fully recovered, he said
to the sabha of mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

15 "I have seen Kuntī's mahā-chariot-heroes,
O Indra-among-rājās,
emaciated after their stay
with the rājā of Matsya.

16 Mahārāja, let me give you a list
of their allies.
You will have to contend with the valour
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

17 You will have to fight a dharmātmā,
Yudhiṣṭhira himself,
whom wealth, fear, greed, artha
cannot seduce from truth,

18 Who is, mahārāja,
an authority on dharma,
who is the finest practiser of dharma,
who is foe-less Ajātaśatru,

19 Whose physical strength is unmatched.
The great bowman
who conquered the world's rulers,
and vanquished
the peoples of Kāśi, Aṅga, Magadha,
and Kaliṅga –

20 Bhīma himself – is ranged against you.
He is the man
responsible for rescuing the Pāṇḍavas
so bravely

21 From the burning house of lac –
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
son of Kuntī – who saved them also
from man-eating Hiḍimba –

22 Wolf-waisted Bhīma, Kuntī's son,
who saved Draupadī
from being ravished
by the rājā of the Sindhus, Jayadratha.

23 The Pāṇḍavas will fight you
with the help of Bhīma
who saved them from the conflagration
of Vāraṇāvata,

24 And who, to please Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
climbed the intimidating mountain
Gandhamādana
and killed the Krodhavaśas,

25 Whose arms are reputed to be as strong
as ten thousand elephants –
that Pāṇḍava Bhīma
will fight against you.

26 The hero who, in the distant past,
to please the god of fire Jātaveda
with Krishna's help
defeated Puraṁdara-Indra.

27 The hero who pleased the god of gods,
  Deva-deva Umāpati lord-of-Umā,
trident-wielding mountain-dwelling
  Śūlapāṇi Girīśa-Śiva himself –

28 The great bow-wielder Arjuna,
  who has subjugated
all the rulers of the world,
  is ranged against you.

29 Brave Nakula who conquered
  the western *mleccha*-inhabited territories,
great warrior,
  is also with them.

30 The sons of Pāṇḍu
  will have that magnificent
bow-wielding son of Mādri
  fighting on their side.

31 Brave Sahadeva is ranged against you –
  the same Pāṇḍava warrior
who subdued the rulers of Kāśi,
  Aṅga, Magadha and Kaliṅga.

32 The hero whose achievements are equalled
  in this world only by four others –
Aśvatthāman, Dhṛṣṭaketu,
  Rukmin, Pradyumna –

33 Sahadeva himself, magnificent hero,
  the giver of joy to Mādri,
will be there
  to fight against you.

34 The daughter of the king of Kāśī,
  Ambā, who performed severe tapasyā
in order to revenge herself
  on Bhīṣma,

35 Was re-born as a daughter
  of the king of the Pāñcālas,
and fortuitously changed her sex
  into a male –
who knows the vices and virtues
  of males and females –

36 That Pāñcāla prince who fought
the Kaliṅgas –
that weapons-expert Śikhaṇḍin
is ranged against you.

37 You will have to fight
against that mahā-bowman –
the yakṣa-transformed she-become-he
who desires Bhīṣma's death.

38 The five mighty Kekaya brothers,
all mahā-bowmen –
princes in coats-of-mail,
are ranged against you.

39 You will have to fight
against the Vṛṣṇi hero,
the long-armed, incredibly strong and skilful
Yuyudhāna-Sātyakī.

40 You will have to fight
against the protector
of the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas –
the king named Virāṭa.

41 You will have to fight
the rājā of Vārāṇasī,
the mahā-chariot-hero lord of Kāśī,
who is loyal to the Pāṇḍavas.

42 Fighting for the Pāṇḍavas' cause
are the mahātmā sons
of Draupadī,
who are as fierce as snakes.

43 Fighting for the Pāṇḍavas' cause
is Abhimanyu,
who is brave like Krishna,
disciplined like Yudhiṣṭhira.

44 Renowned Dhṛṣṭaketu,
of incredible strength,
the mahā-chariot-warrior son of Śiśupāla,
absolutely invincible,

45 And the rājā of the Cedis
who has supplied
an entire *akṣauhiṇī*,
will be fighting for the Pāṇḍavas.

46 And Vāsudeva-Krishna,
who is the support of the Pāṇḍavas
as Vāsava-Indra is of the gods,
stands for the Pāṇḍavas.

47 Also helping the Pāṇḍavas is Śarabha,
brother of the Cedi king,
who is assisted
by Karakarṣa.

48 Jarāsandha's son Sahadeva,
and Jayatsena,
both brilliant war-heroes,
are supporting the Pāṇḍava cause.

49 The mahā-radiant army of Drupada,
a king of enormous prowess,
is eager to fight
on the Pāṇḍava side.

50 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira has these
and many others
from the east and the north
to support him."

## SECTION FIFTY-ONE

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "You have named men
of mahā-fame and enterprise.
Bhīma by himself
equals all of them.

2 *Tāta*! Dear one!
I fear the enraged Bhīma
as a large deer fears the attack
of a powerful provoked tiger.

3 *Tāta*! Dear one! I toss sleepless at night,
sighing fearfully,
haunted by wolf-waisted Bhīma
of leonine strength.

4 I cannot see a single person
in my army
who can resist long-armed,
Śakra-Indra-powerful Bhīma.

5 That Pāṇḍava, Kuntī's son,
is a bitter adversary;
he never jokes, he is hot-tempered,
and mahā-roaring thunder-voiced.

6 He is mahā-powerful and energetic.
His long arms and huge rage
will not spare
any of my wicked sons.

7 Wolf-waisted Bhīma will pulverise the Kauravas
with his upraised mace,
like Antaka-Yama
with his deadly rod.

8 I can see in my mind
that fierce eight-sided
gold-filigreed iron mace uplifted,
like the chastising rod of Brahmā.

9 Bhīma will roam with impunity
among my forces
like a giant lion
among a herd of deer.

10 He was always pointedly cruel
to my sons.
He is a huge eater.
Even as a boy, he hated my sons.

11 I tremble when I think of the many times
that Bhīma with elephant-strength
routed Duryodhana and my other sons
in games.

12 My sons have always been afraid
of his strength.
Bhīma is chiefly responsible
for the present rupture.

13 I see Bhīma possessed by anger,
leading his army
and massacring my soldiers, cavalry,
and elephants.

14 His strength equals Droṇa's and Arjuna's,
he is wind-swift;
his anger is like Maheśvara-Śiva's.
Who can kill him in battle?

15 Who can kill furious Bhīma in battle?
Sañjaya, tell me.
I think myself blessed
that that great foe-slayer

16 Has not already killed off
all my sons,
for even the yakṣas and rākṣasas
were slaughtered by him.

17 How can anyone think of combating him
on the field?
Sañjaya, even I could not control him
when he was a boy.

18 How can Yudhiṣṭhira pacify
cruel and wrathful wolf-waisted Bhīma?
He will break, not bend.
His eyebrows
are always contracted in suspicion.
No peace for him.

19 He is honey-complexioned,
and straight as a palm-tree;
he is a thumb taller
than his brother Arjuna.

20 He can outrun horses,
he is stronger than elephants.
Pāṇḍu's second son has eyes
that are liquid-soft.

21 I heard about the muscular power
and handsomeness
of this Pāṇḍava boy
from the lips of Vyāsa.

22 This heinous human will ruthlessly
use his mace
to slaughter soldiers, chariot-heroes,
horses, elephants.

23 He is Bhīma, indescribably wrathful.
And I, *tāta*, dear one,
often rebuked him
because he disobeyed me.

24 His uncurving, smooth, gold-filigreed,
heavy iron mace
that, thudding down, kills thousands,
will crush my sons.

25 The sweep of a shoreless, unfathomable,
and uncrossable ocean is Bhīma.
*Tāta*! Dear one! My wicked sons
wish to cross that ocean.

26 I advise them against it;
but they think themselves clever paṇḍits,
and do not listen. Hankering for honey,
they forget the fall.

27 Those who rush into battle to face
that embodiment of death,
are ordained by the Creator
to die,
like herds of large deer
thrown to the lions.

28 How can my sons survive the mace
when it's hurled –
that four-cubit, six-sided,
fatal-to-touch mace?

29 Swinging his mace and smashing the heads
of elephants,
licking his lips, and bellowing roars
all the time,

30 Screaming as he fells the massive elephants,
charging with horrendous yells
at elephants
rushing at him,

31 Clubbing his way to the chariots,
he will slaughter all my heroes.
None will escape
that flaming terror.

32 Crushing my fourfold army
as he slices through it,
dancing wildly
with his huge uplifted mace,
he will enact the dissolution
at the end of a yuga.

33 Woelf-waisted Bhīma will reduce to pulp
the army of my sons,
like an intoxicated elephant
trampling flowering trees.

34 He will make chariots soldierless,
driverless, horseless, and bannerless;
he will harass chariot-heroes
and elephants,

35 And he will spread chaos
in my army's ranks,
like the Gaṅgā-currents uprooting trees
on the river-banks.

36 Hounded by Bhīma, my sons,
their servants and lesser chiefs
will flee from the field
in total panic.

37 This is the mahā-valiant Bhīma who,
helped by Vāsudeva-Krishna,
killed rājā Jarāsaṁdha in his inner palace
in the distant past –

38 The very same Jarāsaṁdha,
who, as lord of Magadha,
subdued the earth-devī
and exploited her people.

39 It is the good luck of the Kauravas
and the cleverness
of the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
that saved them from Jarāsaṁdha.

40 Yet the son of Pāṇḍu,
the long-armed hero Bhīma,
weaponless went and killed Jarāsaṁdha.
It was most wonderful!

41 Like a snake that accumulates its poison for long,
Sañjaya,
Bhīma will spill his strength
on my sons in battle.

42 Like Mahendra-Indra hurling his thunderbolt
on the Dānavas,
Bhīma will fling his mace
and kill my sons.

43 I see wolf-waisted Bhīma,
with copper-bright eyes,
absolutely irrepressible,
falling fearfully upon my army.

44 Who dares to oppose that marvellous warrior
who fights bare-handed,
without mace or bow,
or even a chariot?

45 Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
and Śaradvat's son
know as well as I do
about Bhīma's greatness.

46 They know the ways of Āryan nobility,
they are ready to die
on the field;
they will lead all my armies.

47 I know the Pāṇḍavas will win.
Yet I do not stop my sons.
I believe in fate.
I hope for the best.

48 Bhīṣma and the mahā-bowmen follow
the noble, ancient way –
and they will perish in battle,
with their fame untarnished.

49 *Tāta!* Dear one!
To them the Pāṇḍavas
are as dear as my sons;
the Pāṇḍavas are the grandsons of Bhīṣma,
and the disciples of Droṇa
and of Kṛpa.

50 The respect and hospitality
that we have shown
to the three elders,
the little we have done for them –
they will amply recompense for that
on the field, Sañjaya.

51 Kṣatriya-dharma declares
that it is moral and noble
for a warrior to die fully armed
on the battlefield.

52 But I grieve for those
who will fight the Pāṇḍavas.
The doom Vidura predicted
is upon us.

53 I think, Sañjaya, wisdom by itself
cannot overcome sorrow;
an excess of sorrow, indeed,
overpowers wisdom.

54 Even the liberated ṛṣis, who serenely witness
the drama of human life,
rejoice at happiness
and grieve at sorrow.

55 Why shouldn't I give in to grief?
I have sons,
a kingdom, a wife, grandsons, friends –
hundreds of reasons.

56 What must I do in the impending crisis?
All I see
is the certain destruction
of all the Kauravas.

57 The dice-game began it –
the doom of the Kurus is near –
through the wickedness
of that greedy fool.

58 Such is unending Kāla,
which makes all things happen.
I am tied to the wheel of Kāla,
I cannot escape.

59 What should I do? How?
Where can I go, Sañjaya?
Kāla will wipe out the race
of foolish Kauravas.

60 My hundred sons slaughtered,
and the wailing of the women
on the battlefield! I am lost!
Sañjaya, *tāta*, dear one, I want to die.

61 Like wind-fanned flames
consuming dry grass in summer,
the mace-wielding Pāṇḍavas Bhīma and Arjuna
will kill my people."

## SECTION FIFTY-TWO

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra continued:
"He who never speaks untruths,
who has Dhanañjaya-Arjuna on his side,
can conquer the three worlds.

2 I think about this all the time,
but I know one who can,
from a chariot,
oppose the Gāṇḍīva-wielder.

3 Who can equal the Gāṇḍīva-wielder
when he fires
winged heart-piercing arrows
and *nālīka* pipe-missiles?

4 The bull-brave Bharatas –
Droṇa and Karṇa,
hugely powerful, invincible, skilful –
will oppose him,

5 And other warriors will have hopes,
but they will lose.
Karṇa is conceited and sentimental
and ācārya Droṇa is getting old;
besides,
he is the guru of Arjuna.

6 Pārtha-Arjuna has enterprising energy;
he is tireless,
A terrible battle will follow,
and he remain undefeated.

7 All these mahā-famed heroes,
skilled in weapons of all kinds,
may conquer the gods –
buṭ they will lose this battle.

8 Peace is possible if both die,
or Phālguna-Arjuna dies.
But who can defeat Arjuna,
let alone kill him?

9 How can his proud anger be appeased?
Many warriors are weapon-experts:
sometimes they lose,
sometimes they win.

10 But what I hear is that Phālguna-Arjuna
is always victorious.
Thirty-three years ago, he gratified
the god of fire in Khāṇḍavaprastha

11 After routing the gods. No man has heard
of anyone defeating Arjuna.
His charioteer
is Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna himself.

12 His victory is as certain
as that of Indra.
The two Krishnas in one chariot,
and the Gāṇḍīva-bow –

13 These three energies are now united.
So I am told.
There is no similar bow, warrior,
or charioteer.

14 The fools who follow Duryodhana
are unaware of this, Sañjaya.
The thunderbolt that strikes the head
leaves something at least unharmed,

15 But the arrows of Kirīṭin-Arjuna
leave nothing untouched.
I can see Dhanañjaya-Arjuná shining
in an aura of destruction,

16 Slicing heads from bodies
with his rain of arrows.
I see his lustre shooting forth
in swarms of arrows

17 That stream from the Gāṇḍīva
and scorch the Bhārati army of my sons.
Panic-stricken
by Savyasācī-Arjuna's chariot-roarṡ,

18 My army scatters in all directions.
A mahā-conflagration,
fanned by the wind,
incinerates my fleeing soldiers.

19 Invincible Kirīṭin-Arjuna
with calamitous arrows
destroys my soldiers;
he is like Antaka-Kāla,
Creator-commanded,
ordaining their deaths.

20 When I see and hear
ill omens reported
in the camps of the Kauravas,
before the great war,
I will know that the doom
of the Bharatas has come."

## SECTION FIFTY-THREE

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra continued: "Pāṇḍu's sons
are strong and eager for victory.
Their dedicated followers
also want victory.

2 You have given me information
about my major enemies –
the kings of Pāñcāla, Kekaya, Matsya,
and Magadha.

3 Even the world-creator Krishna,
who can subdue these realms and Indra's,
has decided
to support the Pāṇḍavas.

4 Śaini-Sātyaki has trained himself thoroughly
under Arjuna,
and he will shoot arrows as liberally
as sowers scatter seeds.

5 Ruthless Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
renowned as a mahā-chariot-hero
who can handle sophisticated weapons,
supports the Pāṇḍavas.

6 *Tāta!* Dear one!
I fear the anger of Yudhiṣṭhira,
the prowess of Arjuna and the twins,
and the strength of Bhīma.

7 They will cast a magic arrow-net
on my soldiers,
pinning them down inescapably.
This haunts me, Sañjaya.

8 Yudhiṣṭhira is handsome, independent,
Lakṣmī-favoured, radiant like Brahmā,
intelligent, percipient –
indeed a dharmātmā is Pāṇḍu's son.

9 He has friends, advisers,
and totally loyal soldiers;
he has brave brothers and fathers-in-law,
and mahā-chariot-heroes.

10 He is a tiger-among-men;
this Pāṇḍava has patience, discretion,
gentleness, benevolence, humility, truth,
and prowess.

11 He knows all the *śrutis*, practises discipline,
respects the elderly,
controls his senses;
he is an all-virtuous, radiant flame.

12 What doomed, deluded idiot
wants to perish
like a moth in the ceaseless fire
of the Pāṇḍavas?

13 I have wronged that radiant,
long-flamed rājā,
and he will consume my foolish sons
in battle.

14 I think it is best if we do not fight.
Take note of that, O Kurus.
If you wage war,
your race is doomed.

15 It is perfectly clear to me.
This will bring me solace.
If you think peace is best,
then let us try for peace.

16 Yudhiṣṭhira will never remain indifferent
if he sees us suffering;
he blames me only
for my adharma."

SECTION FIFTY-FOUR

1 “Mahārāja,” said Sañjaya,
 “what you say is right.
The Gāṇḍīva-caused doom of Kṣatriyas
 is in sight.

2 I cannot understand how you,
 who are wise
and know about Savyasācī-Arjuna’s greatness,
 allow your sons to delude you.

3 O bull-brave mahārāja,
 you have consistently harmed the Pāṇḍavas;
you exiled them.
 Now is hardly the time to repent.

4 A father is like a friend
 who guides those he cherishes.
A person who violates this duty,
 is no guru-elder.

5 Mahārāja, when you heard
 of the dice-game’s outcome,
you childishly laughed at the words,
 ‘We’ve won, we’ve won!’

6 You neglected the Pāṇḍavas
 because your sons
had won their kingdom.
 You did not foresee the consequences.

7 Mahāraja, the territory of the Kauravas,
 along with Jāṅgala,
is your paternal share;
 but you now rule the kingdom

8 Which the Pāṇḍava heroes annexed
 by their conquests, and,
O excellent rājā, you think,
 ‘I won all this by myself.’

9 O excellent monarch,
when the rājā of the gandharvas
captured your sons,
and they seemed to be drowning
in a shoreless ocean,
the Pāṇḍavas came to their rescue.

10 When the Pāṇḍavas lost the dice-game
and were sent into exile
as wanderers,
you laughed like a child, O rājā.

11 When Phalguna-Arjuna fires his volley
of sharp arrows,
whole oceans dry up,
not to mention corporeal objects.

12 Arjuna is the finest of bowmen;
the Gāṇḍīva, finest of bows;
Keśava-Krishna, of mortals;
Sudarśana, of weapons.

13 Of pennants and flags,
the one with the ape-symbol, Arjuna's,
is the finest. The white-horsed chariot
that has all these

14 Will trample us down
like the *cakra* of Kāla.
The rājā of the world is he,
O bull-brave Bharata-rājā,

15 Who has the two warriors,
Arjuna and Bhīma,
flanking him. He will witness Bhīma
destroy your army.

16 Crushed by the terror of Arjuna and Bhīma,
the Kauravas
will be exterminated.
Victory cannot be achieved

17 By your son, O maharaja,
or by his followers.
The kings of Matsya, Pāñcāla, and Kekaya
have rejected you;

18 So have the kings of Śālva and Śurasena.
Instead,
they have preferred to join
wise and brave Yudhiṣṭhira.

19 They are loyal to him,
and opposed to your sons.
The man who molests
the above-blame dharma-firm Pāṇḍavas,

20 Treating them with insolence,
deserves to be restrained.
He and his followers
must be vicious-minded people.

21 What is the use, mahārāja,
grieving for your sons?
I and wise Vidura predicted this
during the dice-game.

22 All this deep concern for the Pāṇḍavas
is meaningless now.
O Indra-among-rājās,
useless now to say you were helpless.

## SECTION FIFTY-FIVE

1 "Mahārāja, do not be unduly upset,"
said Duryodhana.
"Do not worry about us.
We will win the battle, radiant one.

2 When Krishna, slayer of Madhu,
came to the exiled Pāṇḍavas
with a huge army
able to vanquish foes,

3 When Kekaya, Dhṛṣṭaketu,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna of the Pṛṣatas,
and many other rājās also joined
the Pāṇḍavas,

4 When the chariot-heroes camped
not far from Indraprastha,
they put the blame on you
and other Kauravas.

5 When, led by Krishna,
they offered their homage
to Yudhiṣṭhira,
who happened to be wearing deer-skin,

6 And spoke of making Yudhiṣṭhira
the royal sovereign,
after overthrowing you
and all your faithful followers,

7 O rājā, it was I who,
fearful of the family carnage,
said to Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Kṛpa,
who listened attentively:

8 'It is Vāsudeva-Krishna who wants to ruin
the Kaurava clan.
I am confident the Pāṇḍavas will decide
not to fight.

9 Excepting Vidura, you will all be killed.
Finest-of-Kauravas Dhṛtarāṣṭra
is a man of dharma,
he will be spared.

10 *Tāta!* Respected ones! It is destroyer-of-people
Krishna who seeks to destroy us
and make Yudhiṣṭhira sole sovereign
of the Kaurava kingdom.

11 So what should we do
at this time of crisis?
Run, surrender, or decide to fight
to the death?

12 It appears that if we make a stand,
we will lose,
because all the rulers
are on Yudhiṣṭhira's side.

13 Bereft of their kingdoms,
our friends now scorn us.
Even our kinsmen dislike us,
as do various kings.

14 We could of course surrender;
after all, we want peace.
But I feel sorry
for my wisdom-inseeing father,

15 Who will have to suffer
on account of my deeds.'
Father, you know your sons
did what they did
only for the family's welfare.
O finest-of-men! This you know surely.

16 The mahā-chariot-hero sons of Pāṇḍu
are determined to take revenge
by wiping out rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and his courtiers.

17 Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Kṛpa and Aśvatthāman
sensed my mahā-torment
in this matter, and they gave me
this advice:

18 'There is no need to fear the foes
who attack us;
it is impossible for them to defeat us,
O foe-destroyer.

19 Each of us singly can defeat
all the world's rulers.
Let them come! Our sharp arrows
will demoralise them.

20 In the past all the world's rulers
were vanquished by single-charioted Bhīṣma,
who was enraged
over his father Śāntanu's death.

21 That excellent Kaurava, in his indignation,
killed many kings;
the others, terrified, rushed to him
for protection.'

22 Now Bhīṣma is ready to fight on our side
against our foes.
O bull-brave Bharata,
you can forget your fears.

23 This was the assurance and decision
of Bhīṣma and other great ones
at that time. At one time
their foes dominated the world.

24 Now they are incapable of dominating us;
the Pāṇḍavas
are powerless,
their wings have been clipped.

25 The world is under our control,
O bull-brave Bharata,
and the earth-rulers share my joys
and my sorrows.

26 For my sake, the earth-rulers are ready
to jump into fire
or plunge in the ocean. O bull-brave Kaurava,
you should know this.

27 They laugh to see you depressed
and incoherent,
given to wild lamentation
and afraid of your enemies.

28 Each rājā singly can face
all the Pāṇḍavas;
each is supremely confident.
Cast aside your needless fears.

29 Even Vāsava-Indra cannot defeat my army
which is limitless;
Self-Born Svayambhu-Brahmā
cannot do so.

30 Yudhiṣṭhira has reduced his claims
to just five villages.
He must be terrified by my army
and my prowess.

31 What you have been hearing of the strength
of Vṛkodara Bhīma,
the wolf-waisted one, is baseless;
greater than his is my prowess.

32 There is none in the world to equal me
in mace-combat.
I have never had an equal,
I will never have any.

33 I have dedicated myself,
and learnt my lessons well.
I am not afraid of Bhīma
nor of anyone else.

34 Father, may you prosper!
My teacher was Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma.
One thing is certain – none equals Duryodhana
in mace-combat,

35 In a duel I am Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma's equal,
in strength I excel all.
Bhīma cannot survive
the blows of my mace.

36 When I am fully roused,
one blow of my mace
is enough to cripple and send Bhīma
to Vaivasvata-Death's abode.

37 I want to face the wolf-waisted one,
armed with mace –
I have long yearned for this,
it is my heart's desire, O rājā.

38 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son, Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
needs just one blow
from my mace to make him
a lump of lifeless flesh.

39 One mahā-blow of my mace is sufficient
to disintegrate
the Himavat mountain
into a hundred thousand fragments.

40 Vāsudeva-Krishna and Arjuna know well that,
in a fight with maces,
no one is the equal
of Duryodhana.

41 Forget your fear of wolf-waisted Bhīma,
O rājā.
I promise to kill him in the mahā-war.
You can depend on me.

42 And after I have killed him,
O bull-brave Bharata
other chariot-heroes as brave as me
will rush in and finish off Arjuna.

43 Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, Karṇa, Bhūriśravas,
The king of Prāgjyotiṣa, Śalya, rājā Jayadratha of
Sindhu –

44 Each of these singly has the power
to kill the Pāṇḍavas.
United, they can instantly despatch them
to Yama's nealm.

45 How can it be that our whole army
of powerful kings
will fail to kill one Dhanañjaya-Arjuna?
Incessantly targeted by Bhīṣma's arrows

46 And by those of Droṇa,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthaman and Kṛpa,
Pārtha-Arjuna will perish.
Our grandsire Bhīṣma –

47 He is like a Brahma-ṛṣi, born in the world
but unconquerable even by gods,
No one can kill Bhīṣma,
O rājā.

48 His father, gratified by him,
granted him this boon:
'You will die only
when you want to die.'
Droṇa was born to Brahma-ṛṣi Bharadvāja
in a *droṇa* water-pot.

49 Mahārāja, Droṇa's son is Aśvatthāman,
an excellent arms-expert.
Ācārya Kṛpa was born
to the mahā-ṛṣi Gautama.

50 He was born in a shrub;
he cannot be killed.
Wombless too were Aśvatthāman's father, mother,
and maternal uncle.

51 That hero has joined us.
Mahārāja, these chariot-warriors
are as powerful and splendid
as the gods.

52 They can harass even Śakra-Indra
on the battlefield, O bull-brave Bharata!
Arjuna alone dare not face a single one
of these heroes.

53 Together they can easily kill Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
I am certain
that Karṇa equals Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Kṛpa –
all three together.

54 Paraśurāma said to Karṇa:
'You are my equal.'
He was born with two auspicious
flesh-earrings,

55 Which foe-crushing Indra took
to give to his queen Śacī.
In exchange, mahārāja, Karṇa received
an invincible śaktī-missile.

56 What chance has Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
against such a person?
O rājā, my victory is as clear as a fruit
held in my hands.

57 Our victory and our enemies' defeat
are obvious from the fact
that in one day
Bhīṣma kills ten thousand.

58 The expert archers Droṇa, Aśvatthāman
and Kṛpa are like Bhīṣma.
Besides, O foe-chastiser,
the Saṁśaptaka Kṣatriyas

59 Who have vowed to kill Savyasācī-Arjuna –
are determined:
'Either we kill him,
or the ape-bannered hero kills us.'

60 These are the kings who support me.
Why are you, O bull-brave Bharata,
needlessly afraid? With Bhīma killed,
who will dare fight?

61 Name me one among my enemies
who will do so.
The five Pāṇḍavas, with Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and Sātyaki,

62 Make up seven whom you consider
to be excellent.
O rājā! The excellent on our side are Bhīṣma,
Drona, Kṛpa,

63 Droṇa's son, Karṇa, Somadatta, Bāhlīka,
The king of Prāgjyotiṣa, Śalya, Avanti's two rulers,
Jayadratha,

64 Duḥśāsana, Durmukha, Duḥsaha, and, O world-lord,
Śrutāyus, Citrasena, Purumitra, Viviṁśati,

65 Śala, Bhūriśravas, Vikarṇa, and your sons.
We are superior. I have succeeded in assembling
Eleven *akṣauhiṇīs* for the forthcoming war.

66 They have seven *akṣauhiṇīs.*
How can we lose?
Bṛhaspati's advice is that any army
that is one-third less
should be confronted.
We have a one-third superiority.

67 I do not find any special qualities
in their army;
but when I see mine,
I find we have many.

68 So why are you apprehensive, O Bharata descendant?
Our army is far superior,
the Pāṇḍavas inferior
in size and quality."

69 Hostile-city-destroyer Duryodhana said this,
and turned to Sañjaya
for information about the Pāṇḍavas,
which was so crucial now.

## SECTION FIFTY-SIX

1 "Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira has succeeded
in marshalling seven *akṣauhiṇīs*, Sañjaya,"
said Duryodhana. "He wants to fight.
What is his mood?"

2 "Cheerful," replied Sañjaya,
"and poised to attack, O rājā.
So are Bhīma and Arjuna.
The twins show no fear.

3 Kuntī's son, dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
to test the efficacy of his mantras,
has driven his celestial chariot
everywhere.

4 I saw him in resplendent armour,
dazzling like a lightning-charged cloud.
He was pensive for a while,
then he said lightly:

5 'We will win, Sañjaya.
You can see the signs.'
This is what Bībhatsu-Arjuna told me.
I was convinced."

6 Duryodhana said: "You are delighted
to praise the Pāṇḍavas
who lost the dice game.
Tell me, what breed of horses
are yoked to Arjuna's chariot,
what are his war-flags?"

7 Sañjaya replied: "The celestial artificer Tvaṣṭā,<br>
and the Creator,<br>
with Śakra-Indra's assistance,<br>
devised numerous designs, O radiant one,

8 And they wove, with celestial māyā,<br>
those patterns –<br>
large, most subtle, and mahā-precious –<br>
into the banner.

9 Requested by Bhīma, Hanumān himself,<br>
the son of the wind-god Marut<br>
will have his image woven<br>
in that banner.

10 The māyā of Tvaṣṭā<br>
is such that the banner<br>
is a *yojana* in every<br>
direction one looks.<br>
And trees are unable<br>
to entangle its fluttering.

11 This banner of Tvaṣṭā<br>
has the spectrum of colours<br>
of Sakrā-Indra's rainbow<br>
that dazzles the sky –<br>
yet no one can tell<br>
its manner of making.

12 The banner of Tvaṣṭā<br>
is weightless and smooth;<br>
it flutters like smoke<br>
that, mixing with flames,<br>
ascends to the sky,<br>
incredibly beautiful.

13 The celestial horses<br>
are dazzlingly white<br>
and swift like the wind –<br>
gifts of Citraratha.<br>
Nothing in the world,<br>
in the sky, or in heaven,<br>
can hamper their swiftness.<br>
A boon that was granted<br>
in the past enables

these horses to be always
a hundred, no matter
how many are killed.

14 The chariot of rājā
Yudhiṣṭhira has powerful,
ivory-white horses.
The horses of Bhīma
are black like bears
and swift like wind.

15 The horses of Sahadeva,
gifted by Phālguna-Arjuna
with love to his brother,
and better than Arjuna's
in splendour of limbs,
are black and mottled
like *tittira*-birds;
they are strong and untiring
carriers of Sahadeva.

16 The horses of Ājamīḍha,
Madrī's son Nakula,
were gifted by Indra.
They are wind-swift, untiring,
and they carry Nakula
as they did the Vṛtra-killer.

17 The Pāṇḍava princes,
the sons of Subhadrā
and Draupadī, have horses
of magnificent size,
and identical strength,
innumerable colours,
never get exhausted.
These marvellous horses
were the gifts of the gods."

## SECTION FIFTY-SEVEN

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked: "Who have you seen
  come voluntarily, Sañjaya,
to help the Pāṇḍavas in their plans
  against my sons?

2 "I have seen the chief of the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas –
  Krishna,"
said Sañjaya.
  "Also Cekitāna, and Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki –

3 Both mahā-chariot-warriors,
  proud of their valour.
They joined the Pāṇḍavas
  with one *akṣauhiṇī* each.

4 Also Drupada, the Pāñcāla king,
  with his ten sons, the best-known being Satyajit,
led by Dhṛṣṭadyumna
  with one *akṣauhiṇī*.

5 He arrived supported by Śikhaṇḍin,
  with an army fully equipped
in order to defend
  Pāṇḍava honour.

6 Virāṭa came with his two sons
  Śaṅkha and Uttara.
Sūryadatta and others,
  headed by Madirākṣa,

7 And his brothers and sons,
  arrived to help
the sons of Pāṇḍu
  with an *akṣauhiṇī* of soldiers.

8 Jarāsandha's son, the king of Magadha,
  and Dhṛṣṭaketu, rājā of Cedi,
came each
  with an *akṣauhiṇī*.

9 The five Kekaya brothers,
  with purple banners waving,
came to the sons of Pāṇḍu
  with one *akṣauhiṇī*.

10 I saw them and others too
coming to help the Pāṇḍavas
in their plans of battle
against the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

11 Heading the army is the mahā-chariot-warrior
Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
who is familiar with human, divine, anti-divine
and gandharva battle-formations.

12 Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma will be tackled
by Śikhaṇḍin, O rājā,
who will be reinforced by the Matsya soldiers
of Virāṭa.

13 Yudhiṣṭhira will tackle
the powerful ruler of Madra,
though I heard it said Madra
is Yudhiṣṭhira's match.

14 Bhīma will tackle Duryodhana
and his son
and hundred brothers,
and the southern and eastern armies.

15 Arjuna will tackle Vikartana's son Karṇa,
Aśvatthāman,
Vikarṇa,
and Jayadratha, the king of the Sindhus.

16 Pārtha-Arjuna has also announced
that he will challenge
any hero who thinks himself
to be invincible.

17 The five Kekaya sons of a rājā,
all mahā-archers,
will tackle their Kekaya counterparts
with the Kauravas.

18 They will also face the Mālavas,
Śālvas, and Trigartas,
as well as the do-or-die
Saṁśaptaka heroes.

19 Subhadrā's son has decided to tackle
rājā Bṛhadbala,
and all the sons of Duryodhana,
and Duḥśāsana.

20 Draupadī's sons, all mahā-archers,
flying gold-filigreed banners,
led by Dhṛṣṭadyumna, will tackle Droṇa,
O descendant of Bharata.

21 Cekitāna will meet Somadatta
in chariot-combat,
and Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki will fight Kṛtavarman
of the Bhojas.

22 Mādrī's son, the brave tremendously roaring
Sahedeva,
will tackle your brother Śākuni,
the son of Subala.

23 Mādrī's son Nakula
will tackle Ulūka-Kaitavya,
the son of Śakuni,
and innumerable Sārasvata soldiers.

24 All the other rulers also
have been allotted their duties
on the day of battle;
Yudhiṣṭhira has seen to this, O rājā.

25 His forces have been systematically
organised for this.
I would advise you and your son
to act quickly."

26 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"My foolish dice-deluded sons
who have decided to confront Bhīma,
are as good as dead.

27 The dharma of Kāla has ordained
that these rājās and chiefs
rush into the Gāṇḍīva
as moths into fire.

28 I can see my army decimated
by the mahātmās
whom I converted into enemies.
Who will be loyal to my sons
after the Pāṇḍavas
have defeated them?

29 The Pāṇḍavas are all great chariot-warriors;
they are famous and powerful;
they blaze
like the sun or fire.

30 Their leader is Yudhiṣṭhira,
their supporter Madhusūdana-Krishna,
their warriors are Pāṇḍu's sons
Arjuna and wolf-waisted Bhīma,

31 Nakula and Sahadeva;
also the son of Pṛṣata, Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Sātyaki, Drupada, Dhṛṣṭaketu,
and Dhṛṣṭaketu's son,

32 Uttamaujas of the Pāñcālas,
hard to-defeat Yudhāmanyu,
Śikhaṇḍin, Kṣatradeva,
and Virāṭa's son Uttara,

33 The Kāśīs, the Cedis, the Matsyas,
the Sṛñjayas,
Virāṭa's son Babhru, the Pāñcālas,
and the Prabhadrakas.

34 Even Indra cannot force them
to relinquish the earth,
for they are steadfast heroes
able to shatter mountains.

35 And my wicked son disregards
my insistent protests, Sañjaya,
and wants to fight these all-virtuous
divine heroes."

36 Duryodhana said: "We are the same family,
we live in the same world.
Why do you think
only the Pāṇḍavas can win?

37 Our grandfather Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
and difficult-to-defeat Karṇa,
Jayadratha, Somadatta,
and Aśvatthāman –

38 Even Indra with all his gods
cannot defeat
these brilliantly brave mahā-archers.
How can the Pāṇḍavas?

39 All the rulers of the earth,
of great āryan dignity
and excellence in warfare,
are ready to fight the Pāṇḍavas.

40 The Pāṇḍavas dare not so much
as look at my army.
I am strong enough to challenge
the Pāṇḍavas.

41 These rulers of the earth are securely
on our side, O Bharata descendant,
and will trap the Pāṇḍavas
as if they were baby deer.

42 We have innumerable chariots
and will fire networks of arrow-showers
to defeat the Pāṇḍavas
and the Pāñcālas."

43 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"Sañjaya, my son is a lunatic.
He does not have the śakti to defeat
dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

44 Bhīṣma knows
about the massive prowess
of the wise-in-dharma Pāṇḍavas
and their sons.

45 That is why he is reluctant
to fight those mahātmās.
But tell me more, Sañjaya,
about the Pāṇḍavas' plans.

46 Who are the most energetic in urging
the mahā-archer-Pāṇḍavas,
like ghee fanning the flames
of the sacred fire?"

47 Sañjaya replied: 'Always encouraging them,
O Bharata, is Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
who says : 'Excellent Bharatas, fight!
Have no fear!

48 The few rulers who support
the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
will be scarred with the marks
of our countless weapons.

49 The reckless kings who oppose us,
and their friends and followers –
let me be the *timi* big fish swallowing
all the little fish.

50 I will repulse Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
Aśvatthāman, Śalya, and Duryodhana
like the shore repulsing
the *makara*-filled ocean's waves.'

51 The dharmātmā rājā Yudhiṣṭhira said
to the speaker:
'The Pāñcālas and the Pāṇḍavas depend
on your prowess.

52 Uphold us in this war!
I know that you are a strong-armed hero,
firm in the principles
of Kṣatriya-dharma.

53 You can singly rout all the hosts
of Kauravas.
To confront the war-eager Kauravas
who challenge us –

54 Any plan of yours is acceptable to me,
O foe-exterminator.
Those who scatter and flee will be left
to our mercy.

55 It is the opinion of those
who know the rules of warfare
that the victor who shows mercy
is one in a thousand.

56 O bull-brave warrior,
you are one such valiant hero.
You are the saviour in war
of those who fear.'

57 Kuntī's son, dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
said this;
then absolutely fearless Dhṛṣṭadyumna
turned to me and said:
'Sūta, all those who will fight
for Duryodhana –

58 Tell them, and tell the Pratīpas
and Bāhlīkas,
Kṛpa, Droṇa, Droṇa's son, Jayadratha,
Jayadratha's son,

59 Duḥśāsana, Vikarṇa, king Duryodhana,
and Bhīṣma –
go and tell them –
and do this without delay –

60 That they should despatch
an honourable person
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
saying: 'Take back your kingdom
Else god-protected he and Arjuna
will kill them.

61 There is no hero in this world
who possesses the glory
of the son of Pāṇḍu –
ambidexterous Savysācī-Arjuna.

62 The gods personally guard
the wielder of the Gāṇḍīva.
Mortals cannot defeat him,
Do not even think of fighting him.' "

## SECTION FIFTY-EIGHT

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Despite my objections,
these fools insist
on fighting the excellent Kṣatriya
and brahmacārī Yudhiṣṭhira.

2 Duryodhana, excellent Bharata,
do not start this war.
O great foe-crusher, war cannot be praised,
whatever the justification

3 Half the world should suffice for you
and your followers.
Return to the Pāṇḍavas
their rightful other half.

4 The Kauravas feel it is consistent
with dharma
that you should make peace
with the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas.

5 Son, look carefully
at what your army signifies –
it is the means of your doom.
Don't let folly misguide you.

6 I don't want war; nor does Bāhlīka;
nor Bhīṣma,
nor Droṇa, nor indeed Aśvatthāman,
nor Sañjaya.

7 Somadatta, Śala, and Kṛpa
are against war;
so are Satyavrata, Purumitra, Jaya,
and Bhūriśravas.

8 *Tāta*! My child, accept the fact that those
who are the strength of the Kauravas
are not delighted
at the prospect of war.

9 You are not acting freely;
you are influenced by Karṇa,
Duḥśāsana, and Subala's ill-ātmaned son
Śakuni."

10 Duryodhana replied: "I am not in need
of Droṇa, Bhīṣma,
Aśvatthāman, Sañjaya, Kāmboja, Kṛpa,
and Bāhlīka,

11 Or Satyvrata, Purumitra, and Bhūriśravas.
I do not challenge
the Pāṇḍavas to fight
on the strength of these crutches.

12 O *tāta*! O bull-brave Bharata,
I and Karṇa will together
perform the war-yajña, and Yudhiṣṭhira
will be the sacrificial beast.

13 My chariot will be the altar,
my sword the small ladle,
my mace the large ladle,
my armour the witnesses,
my horses the four priests,
my arrows the blades of kuśa-grass,
my prowess
will be the ghee.

14 We will return lustrous with glory
after defeating our foes,
and performing for Vaivasvata-Yama
this war-yajña.

15 I, Karṇa, and my brother Duḥśāsana –
we three *tāta*, dear father,
will kill the sons of Pāṇḍu
on the field of battle.

16 Either I kill them,
and become the world's sovereign,
or they kill me
and enjoy the wealth of the world.

17 O ever-steadfast father!
I will give up wealth, kingdom, life,
everything, but I cannot live amicably
with the Pāṇḍavas.

18 I will not surrender to the Pāṇḍavas,
revered father,
so much land as is pierced
by the point of a needle."

19 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"I feel sorry for all of you
who follow Duryodhana to death.
I renounce Duryodhana!

20 The Pāṇḍavas will pounce upon you
like tigers on *ruru*-deer,
and slaughter, one by one,
all the Kaurava chiefs.

21 I can see the Bhāratī armies raped
like a helpless girl
by long-armed Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki,
and fleeing in total terror,

22 Augmenting the already full greatness
of Yudhiṣṭhira's army,
Mādhava-Śaini-Sātyaki will shoot arrows
like a sower scattering seeds.

23 And Bhīma will stand like a massive fortress
in front of his army,
fearlessly providing the Pāṇḍavas
protection.

24 When you see your hill-huge tuskers
felled by Bhīma,
and their tusks splintered,
their temples trickling blood,

25 When you see them collapse like hills,
and Bhīma's presence
strikes fear in you,
then you will remember my words.

26 When you see your army of chariots,
cavalry, and elephants
consumed in Bhīma's fire,
then you will remember my words.

27 If you refuse to make peace
with the Pāṇḍavas,
you are doomed.
Bhīma's mace
will despatch you
to the peace of death.

28 When you see your forest-like army
of splendid Kauravas
completely uprooted by Bhīma,
then you will remember my words."

29 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
addressed the rulers
of the earth
(continued Vaiśampāyana);
then, maharāja,
he asked Sañjaya:

## SECTION FIFTY-NINE

1 "What did the two mahātmās,
Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna say?
O mahā-wise Sañjaya,
tell me
what I want to know."

2 Sañjaya replied: "I personally met
Krishna and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
and I will repeat what the two heroes told me,
O Bharata descendant.

3 O rājā! I kept my eyes on my toes
and my hands joined in *añjali*
and my senses completely controlled
in front of these god-like men,
when I entered the inner apartments
to meet them.

4 Neither Abhimanyu nor the Pāṇḍava twins
are permitted in the apartments
where Krishna, Arjuna, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
and lovely Śatyabhāmā live.

5 Their bodies were fragrant with sandalpaste;
both had drunk wine
and looked cheerful in splendid dresses
and ornaments.

6 The two great foe-chastisers
were relaxing on a luxurious couch
covered with expensive carpets
and encrusted with precious gems.

7 Keśava-Krishna's feet rested in Arjuna's lap,
and mahātmā Arjuna's feet
reposed in the laps of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
and Satyabhāmā.

8 Pārtha-Arjuna indicated
a golden seat for me,
but I touched it with my hand,
and sat on the ground.

9 When Pārtha-Arjuna withdrew his feet
from where they rested,
I noticed two auspicious parallel lines
on them.

10 I was mahā-afraid when I saw
those two swarthy-skinned young men
with physiques
like two tall *śāla*-trees.

11 They looked like Indra and Viṣṇu.
I thought:
*Duryodhana is foolish; his faith in Bhīṣma and Droṇa*
*has blinded him*

12 *To the strength*
*of the rājā-of-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira*
*whose wishes these two will carry out.*
So I thought.

13 I was offered food and drink.
Refreshed and pleased,
I raised my folded hands to my head in *añjali*,
and gave your message.

14 The auspiciously-marked, bowstring-scarred
hands of Pārtha-Arjuna
gently lifted Keśava-Krishna's feet.
He asked Krishna to reply to me.

15 As-glorious-as-Indra Krishna,
adorned with glittering ornaments,
rose as resplendent as a flag of Indra's,
then spoke to me.

16 The words of that wonderfully
eloquent speaker were sweet,
gentle, persuasive,
but fearful for Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

17 I heard the melodious words of Krishna,
articulated precisely,
full of artha,
and yet full of foreboding.

18 Vāsudeva-Krishna said:
Sañjaya, repeat my words
to wise Dhṛtarāṣṭra
in the presence of Bhīṣma and Droṇa.

19 But before you convey our message, O Sūta,
give our respects to our elders,
and enquire about the younger Kauravas.
Say:

20 'Perform many yajñas,
be generous with gifts to Brahmins,
and let your wives and sons rejoice freely.
For-mahā doom is approaching.

21 Give money away to those who deserve it;
beget sons;
do good to those you hold dear.
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira seeks victory.'

22 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī supplicated me when I was away,
crying, *Govinda*!
I have yet to pay back the debt
that I owe her.

23 You have dared to make an enemy
of Savyasācī-Arjuna,
the ambidexterous, invincible Gāṇḍīva-wielder,
whom I support.

24 Even Puraṁdara-Indra would dare
to challenge Pārtha-Arjuna, whom I support
only if he wanted
to welcome his own death.

25 The man who defeats Arjuna
could lift the world
with his two arms; he could topple gods
and annihilate humans.

26 I do not see such a person
though I search
among gods, anti-gods, humans, yakṣas,
gandharvas and Nāgas.

27 Proof of this is the mahā-marvellous event
that took place in the city of Virāṭa
when one Pāṇḍava
routed so many foes.

28 Proof of this is the fact
that all of you in Virāṭa
scattered in panic,
though Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna fought alone.

29 Strength, heroism, prowess, nimbleness,
dexterity of hand,
energy and patience unite in Pārtha-Arjuna,
and in none else.'

30 This is what Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna said;
and Pārtha-Arjuna was cheered by his voice
that sounded like Pākaśāsana-Indra's
in the rainy season.

31 When Keśava-Krishna finished,
white-horsed Śvetavāhana-Arjuna,
the diadem-wearer Kīritiṇ,
repeated the horripilating words."

## SECTION SIXTY

1 After listening to Sañjaya
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
the wisdom-inseeing monarch reflected
on the merits and demerits of the speech.

2 He sorted out
the advantages and disadvantages
as well as he could;
he wanted the victory of his sons,

3 So he made arrangements to assess
the relative military
strengths and weakness
of the opposing armies.

4 He came to the conclusion
that the human and superhuman śakti
of the Pāṇḍavas
was far greater
than that of the Kauravas,
so he said to Duryodhana:

5 "This thought keeps troubling me,
Duryodhana.
I am not speculating.
I see and feel the truth of this.

6 You are embarking on a course
that will ruin the world.
It is against honour and reeks of adharma.
*Tāta,* dear son,
I cannot endorse your hatred
of the Pāṇḍavas.

7 All creatures love their offspring,
and do whatever they can
to help them by acting constantly
for their good.

8 You can see this in benefactors too.
Good men try to repay
the good done them
by pleasing their benefactors.

9 Agni will remember the service of Arjuna
in Khāṇḍava
and support him and Bhīma
against the Kaurava forces.

10 Dharma and other heaven-dwellers
will, naturally,
when asked, help the Pāṇḍavas against Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Kṛpa, and others.

11 Their anger will be as horrific
as the thunderbolt
when they protect the Pāṇḍavas from Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Kṛpa, and others.

12 The lion-brave sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
skilled in weapons,
united with the gods,
will blind normal human eyes.

13 And he who possesses the magnificent,
invincible Gāṇḍīva,
and the two divine and inexhaustible
arrow-filled quivers,

14 He who flies the ape-symbolled banner
which waves as serenely as smoke,
whose chariot is as peerless
in the four-oceaned earth,

15 The noise of whose chariot,
to human ears,
is like the reverberation of clouds,
and death-fearful to foes,

16 He who is renowned in this world
for superhuman feats,
whom earth-rulers acknowledge
as victor of the gods,

17 He who can, without being noticed,
string five hundred arrows
and shoot them far
in quick succession,

18 He who is acknowledged by Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Kṛpa, Droṇa's son,
by the rājā-of-Madra Śalya
and all impartial persons

19 To be unbeatable
even by superhuman rulers of the earth,
he who is a foe-crushing tiger-like
chariot-warrior,

20 He who in a flash can fire
five hundred arrows,
the strength of whose arms
equals that of Kārtavīrya, –

21 That is the mahā-bowman Arjuna,
equal to Mahendra-Indra and Upendra-Viṣṇu,
whom I see terrorising his foes
in battle.

22 Because I feel for the good of the Kauravas,
O Bharata descendant,
I toss sleepless day and night.
I am always in torment.

23 The doom of the Kauravas
seems to be upon them.
There seems to be no way to stop it
but peace.

24 Let there be peace with the Pāṇḍavas.
Forget about war.
I know that the Pāṇḍavas are stronger
than the Kauravas."

## SECTION SIXTY-ONE

1 The tempestuous son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
heard his father and, livid with anger,
shouted:

2 "Because the gods are helping the Pāṇḍavas,
O finest of rājās,
you think they cannot be defeated.
This is a baseless fear.

3 The godhood of the gods was won
by absence of kāma,
hate, attachment, greed, anger,
and by indifference to worldly things.

4 That at least is the explanation given to us
by island-born Dvaipāyana Vyāsa,
Nārada of mahā-tapasyā,
and Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma.

5 Unlike men, the gods, O bull-brave Bharata,
are not given to work
that proceeds from kāma, anger, greed,
and hate.

6 Indeed, no problems would have risen
for the Pāṇḍavas
if Agni, Vāyu, Indra, Dharma, and the Aśvins
acted out of kāma-yoga.

7 So don't let this agitate you.
O Bharata-descendant,
the gods will always do
what the gods always do.

8 If, however, the gods become motivated
by kāma, greed, attachment, and hate,
then it will contradict
their very nature.

9 Besides, I have power too, with mantras,
to extinguish Jātaveda-Agni if I wish,
no matter how strongly
he wants to blaze.

10 The energy of the heaven-dwellers
is enormous,
but mine is no less, perhaps greater.
Remember this, O Bharata.

11 With my mantras I can,
in front of everyone's eyes, O rājā,
reunite the split earth
or join rifts in mountain-peaks.

12 The ruin of animate and inanimate life,
the collapse
of moving and unmoving life –
the raucous mahā-noise

13 Of huge boulders falling and storms blowing –
all this I can control,
in the world's eyes,
with my concern for creatures.

14 I can petrify the waters
for chariots and soldiers to cross.
I can supervise the gods and anti-gods
if I wish.

15 I can mentally guide my cavalry
in whatever direction I wish,
conforming to the march
of my *akṣauhiṇīs.*

16 My esoteric mantras protect my subjects
from fearful monsters,
and neutralise the poisonous snakes
in my territories.

17 My subjects get as much rain
as they need, O rājā;
they are attached to dharma,
and do not suffer calamities.

18 The Aśvins, Vāyu, Agni,
the slayer-of-Vṛtra Indra,
the Maruts, Dharma dare not protect those
whom I hate.

19 Had they the power to protect my enemies,
would Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
have had to suffer thirteen years
of exile?

20 It is the truth I am speaking –
neither gods, antigods,
gandharvas, nor rākṣasas have the śakti
to save my foes.

21 I have never before failed in giving
whatever pleasure or pain
I wanted to give
to my friends or foes.

22 O foe-crusher, have I ever been wrong?
Believe me,
it will turn out as I say.
I always speak the truth.

23 The world recognises me as a mahātmā;
it spreads my fame.
I console you, O king,
not flatter myself.

24 I have never, O rājā, even in the past
flattered myself;
only the man without character
praises himself.

25 You will hear from me
how I defeat the Pāṇḍavas,
the Matsyas, Pāñcālas, Kekayas, Sātyaki,
and Vāsudeva-Krishna.

26 Rivers fall in the sea and perish.
So they too,
falling in my prowess,
will be liquidated.

27 I have superior intelligence, prowess,
and strength.
My knowledge, my yoga, and execution
are superior.

28 I have in me all the knowledge
of weapons
that Pitāmaha Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, Śalya
and Śala have."

29 O foe-crushing Janamejaya!
Realising Duryodhana
was bent on declaring war,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra began questioning Sañjaya further.

## SECTION SIXTY-TWO

1 Interrupting Dhṛtarāṣṭra
who was asking Sañjaya
(Vaiśampāyana said),
Karṇa, attempting
to inspire the Kauravas,
addressed Duryodhana

2 "When he saw I had tricked
the missile of Brahmā
from his possession,
Paraśurāma said;
'At the time of your dying,
this will desert you.'

3 My crime was mahā-grievous,
the punishment light!
My guru mahā-ṛṣi,
of invincible śakti
capable of burning
the earth and the seas,

4 Was profoundly pleased
by my full dedication.
I still have the missile,
I am very much alive.
I gladly accept
my responsibility.

5 Through the grace of that ṛṣi,
subduing the Pāñcālas,
the Matsyas, Karūṣas,
the Pāṇḍavas, their sons
and grandsons, I'll offer
the worlds in your hands.

6 Let Bhīṣma Pitāmaha,
let Droṇa and others
all protect you.
I and my warriors
will take on the task
of killing the Pāṇḍavas.

7 "It is certain that Kāla
has stolen your wits,"
said Bhīṣma to Karṇa.
"If a general like you
is killed on the field,
the Kauravas are finished.

8 The thought of the burning
of Khāṇḍava by Arjuna
with Krishna to help him
should be sufficient to check
your impossible ambitions
and those of your friends.

9 The śakti you received
from mahātmā Indra
will shatter and crumble
to ashes when strack
by the celestial *cakra*
of Keśava-Krishna.

10 The serpent-tongued arrow
you wear in your waist
and honour with garlands
will splinter and, with it,
will you when the arrows
of the Pāṇḍavas strike you.

11 The slayer of Bāṇa
and Bhauma is Vāsudeva-Krishna
who, in battle,
has defeated many
enemies like you – and he
supports Kirīṭin-Arjuna."

12 “The Vṛṣṇi mahātmā
is all that you say,
and better,” said Karṇa.
“But grandfather Bhīṣma –
you are unkind to me.
So listen to me!

13 I lay down my weapons!
From now he will see me
in the sabhā, but never
in battle. And only
when Bhīṣma is silent,
will my prowess be seen.”

14 With these words the mahā-archer
(Vaiśampāyana said)
left and went home.
Bhīṣma laughed, O rājā,
and said to Duryodhana
in the midst of the Kauravas:

15 “The son of the Sūta
is a man of hiw word.
What advantage will Bhīma
now take of his absence!
He will shatter the heads
of the Kaurava soldiers!

16 *The king of Avanti*
*and Kaliṅga, Jayadratha,*
*the chief of the Cedis,*
*and Bāhlīka and others*
*will witness my victory* –
was Karṇa’s ambition.

17 But he lost both tapasyā
and dharma when, posing
as Brahmin, he tricked
bhagavān Paraśurāma
to give him the missile –
a despicable deed.”

18 With Karṇa discarding
his weapons, and Bhīṣma
expounding his principles,
small-minded Duryodhana,
Vicitravirya's grandson,
said to Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma:

SECTION SIXTY-THREE

1 "Why do you think victory
is the Pāṇḍavas' monopoly?
They are men like other men,
born like other men.

2 We are as old as they, as famous,
as learned in *śruti*,
we are their equals in heroism
and accomplishment.

3 We were all born human,
In the military arts,
in dexterity, in weapons-skill,
we are as proficient as they.

4 Tell us, grandfather, what makes you sure
they will win?
I depend neither on Droṇa nor Kṛpa
nor Bāhlīka's son

5 Nor any other Indras-among-men.
I, Vikartana's son Karṇa,
and my brother Duḥśāsana
have sufficient strength.

6 Our keen-edged arrows will wipe out
the five Pāṇḍavas;
then, with lavish *dakṣiṇās* offered
at a mahā-yajña,

7 We will honour the Brahmins with cows,
horses, and wealth.
Like nets that trap
unsuspecting herds of deer,
or sucking eddies that pull in
floundering swimmers,

8 Our soldiers will catch the Pāṇḍavas,
who, with Keśava-Krishna,
will discard their pride when they see
our chariots and elephants."

9 Vidura said: "Sure-visioned elders
praise self-control.
They say it is the eternal dharma
of a Brahmin.

10 The man whose self-control is expressed
in charity, tapasyā, knowledge, and study,
receives the benefits of charity,
patience and self-fulfilment.

11 Self-control is pure and excellent;
it enhances energy.
Mahā-benefits follow from increased energy
and self-cleansing.

12 People fear those who have no self-control
as if they were man-eaters.
Brahmā created the Kśatriyas
to restrain those who lack control.

13 Self-control is an excellent vow
for all four of life's āśrama-stages.
Let me characterise for you a man
who has self-control –

14 Patience, fortitude, ahiṁsa, equanimity,
truth, simplicity,
discipline of the senses, stability, gentleness,
modesty, perseverance,

15 The opposite of stinginess, mildness,
contentment, śraddhā –
these are the qualities of the man
who is self-controlled.

16 The man who is self-controlled
does not succumb to kāma,
avarice, pride, envy, sloth,
malice, boasting, and grief.
He has simplicity, purity,
lack of hypocrisy.

17 The man who is self-controlled
is not possessive,
wants little, ignores kāmā-objects,
and is as profound as the ocean.

18 The man of good acts and blameless character
is at peace with his ātman
and is aware
of his own nature;
he achieves respect here
and gets the Ultimate Goal after death.

19 Finest of human beings is the man
who has no fear of others
and whom others do not fear.
He is truly wise.

20 His wisdom makes him serene
and as serious as the sea.
He is everyone's friend and well-wisher;
he makes none feel small.

21 The man who has self-control
is peaceful and happy.
He follows the examples
of past and present good karma.

22 He may also in his wisdom renounce karma
and, happy in his wisdom,
roam free,
waiting for absorption in Brahman.

23 The path of the happy-in-wisdom muni
cannot be seen,
just as the path of sky-soaring birds
cannot be seen.

24 The man who renounces his home
in favour of mokṣa
finds the eternal worlds
of radiant celestial felicity."

## SECTION SIXTY-FOUR

1 Vidura continued: It happened once –
old men say so –
that a fowler set his net in order
to trap birds.

2 Two birds, close friends, were snared
in that net.
They flew up in the sky,
taking the net with them.

3 The fowler saw them soar away,
but he kept
his sense of direction,
and gave hot chase.

4 A holy man, a muni of an āshram,
who had just finished
his evening meditation, saw the fowler
chasing the birds.

5 To the earth-runner
pursuing the sky-roamers,
the holy man addressed this śloka,
O Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

6 "A wonderful sight, that an earth-man should try
To run after creatures that soar in the sky!"

7 The fowler replied:
"They have flown away with my net,
but I will have them
the moment they start quarrelling."

8 And indeed (continued Vidura)
the two doomed birds quarrelled;
and their bickering brought them
down to earth.

9 The bird-killer crept upon them
white they were pecking
at each other, caught in death's net,
and seized both.

10 Like the bickering birds,
squabbling cousin-brothers
who fight over their wealth
are quickly trapped by their enemies.

11 The duty of cousins is not to quarrel,
but to live together,
eating, talking and helping
each other.

12 Those who nobly attend to elders
when required
become as secure
as a lion-protected forest.

13 O bull-brave Bharata, those who prosper
but remain small-minded,
see their prosperity slipping into the hands
of their enemies.

14 A family is like a pile of logs,
O bull-brave Bharata Dhṛtarāṣṭra –
a blazing fire when together,
useless smoke when apart.

15 That reminds me of what I once saw
on a mountain.
Listen to what I have to say, O Kaurava,
and then do as you like.

16 We were up in the northern hills;
there were hunters,
and some god-like Brahmins
discussing chants and plants.

17 The Gandhamādana mountain
looked like a garden;
it glowed with medicinal plants,
Siddhas, and gandharvas.

18 We suddenly spotted
a pot of thick yellow honey
in what was an inaccessible corner
of the mountain.

19 Snakes guarded it,
for it was the favourite drink of Kubera;
tasting it gave immortality
to mere mortals,

20 Sight to the blind, and youth to the aged.
The chants of the Brahmins
referred indeed
to this honey.

21 The hunters desperately tried to seize that pot,
O earth-ruler,
but were all stung and destroyed
on that snake-infested hill.

22 This son of yours thinks
he is the one-without-a-rival:
he is foolish, he sees only the honey,
not the venom.

23 Duryodhana is eager to fight
ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
but I do not see in him
either the skill or the strength.

24 Alone in his chariot, ambidexterous Arjuna
conquered the earth,
and terrorised Bhīṣma, Droṇa
and others.

25 He routed them near the city of Virāṭa.
Recall that defeat!
He watches your faces and movements,
and is patient.

26 The-rājā-of-the-Matsyas Drupada
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
if roused, will consume you
like a wind-fanned fire.

27 O Dhṛtarāṣṭra, take rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
in your lap.
If your armies clash, expect nothing better
than a pointless deadlock."

SECTION SIXTY-FIVE

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Duryodhana, my son,
give careful thought to my words.
An ignorant traveller,
you think the wrong road is right.

2 You want to denude the five Pāṇḍavas
of their powers;
this is like denuding the cosmos
of its five-fold mahā-energy.

3 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
is firmly rooted in dharma.
You cannot defeat him
without losing your life also.

4 You dare to defy Kuntī's son Bhīma
who equals the god-of-death Antaka-Yama
on the battlefield. It's like a tree
defying a mahā-fierce storm.

5 What sensible man would dare challenge
that excellent weapons-wielder,
that Meru-among-mountains
who possesses the Gāṇḍīva?

6 Is there any man in this world
whom Pāñcāla-Dhṛṣṭadyumna cannot defeat
when his arrows fly
like the thunderbolt of Deva-rāja Indra?

7 And impossible-to-vanquish,
dedicated-to-the-Pāṇḍavas Sātyaki,
respected by Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis,
will destroy you.

8 What sensible man would dare fight
lotus-eyed Puṇḍarīkākṣa Krishna
whose strength excels that
of the three worlds together?

9 Krishna thinks his wives, friends, cousins,
ātman, and the earth
together make up the sum of greatness
of one Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

10 Keśava-Krishna, on whom Arjuna depends,
is hard to vanquish,
and Krishna's army cannot be defeated
by the whole world itself.

11 *Tāta*! My son! What your friends say
is for your good.
Accept the advice of your old grandfather,
Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma.

12 Droṇa, Kṛpa, Vikarṇa, mahārāja Bāhlīka
seek the welfare of the Kauravas
and so do I.
Listen to our advice.

13 They are to you as I am to you;
see them as such, O Bharata.
They are fond of you,
and they are wise in dharma.

14 Your army, led by your brothers,
fled in panic from Virāṭa,
leaving you alone,
to surrender.

15 Isn't such a mahā-incredible report enough
to convince you?
After all, they had only one,
and you were so many.

16 If Arjuna could do this alone,
what can the Pāṇḍavas not do united?
Accept them as your brothers,
give them their rights."

## SECTION SIXTY-SIX

1 Mahā-wise, mahā-fortune-favoured Dhṛtarāṣṭra
addressed Suyodhana-Duryodhana
(continued Vaiśampāyana);
then, turning to Sanjaya, he enquired:

2 "Tell me, Sañjaya, the rest of your message –
what Arjuna said
after Vāsudeva-Krishna.
I am eager to hear that."

3 Sañjaya said: "Dhanañjaya-Arjuna listened
to Vāsudeva-Krishna's words;
then hard-to-defeat Arjuna said
within Krishna's hearing:

4 'Our grandfather, Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Droṇa, Kṛpa, Karṇa, and Bāhlīka,
O Sañjaya,

5 Also Drona's son, Somadatta, Subala's son Śakuni,
Duḥśāsana, Śala, Purumitra, Viviṁśati,

6 Vikarṇa, Citrasena, the earth-lord Jayatsena,
Vinda and Anuvinda, and the Kaurava Durmukha,

7 The king of Sindhu, Duḥsaha, Bhūriśravas,
Rājā Bhagadatta, and the earth-lord Jalasaṁdha,

8 And numerous other
lords of the earth
are gathered to die
for the Kaurava cause,
driven by Duryodhana
to fall in our flames.

9 In my name ask the health
of each hero, Sañjaya,
in order of honour.
As for Suyodhana-Duryodhana
of despicable deeds,
tell him this in their midst –

10 Make sure that Duryodhana
of despicable ātman
and covetous mind
distinctly receives
what I say, Sañjaya,
in the presence of all.'

11 With this much as preface,
wise Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
his pink eyes glancing
at Vāsudeva-Krishna,
addressed his message
of dharma-and-artha:

12 'You have heard the sensible
suggestions of mahātmā
Mādhava-Krishna.
Repeat those suggestions
and say that I, Arjuna,
endorse all of them.

13 Let them not act
in a way that leads
to the yajña of war,
where the arrows are smoke,
the rattle of chariots
are the chants of the priests,
and my bow-string the ladle
that will paralyse all
the power of their weapons.

14 If you fail to return
to Yudhiṣṭhira, the slayer
of his enemies, his due,
my arrows will take you,
your horses and elephants,
to the realms of the *pitṛs.*'

15 Taking leave of Dhanañjaya-
Arjuna and Krishna,
the four-armed one,
I did namaskāra,
and brought you this news,
O divinely-radiant one."

## SECTION SIXTY-SEVEN

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
ignored this message:
others kept silent. Finally,
those heroes rose and left.

2 After all the rājās of the world
had departed, O mahārāja,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked Sañjays
in private

3 About the plans of his people
and the Pāṇḍavas.
He was fond of his son
and wanted a Kaurava victory.

4 "Tell me, son of Gavalgaṇa,
where my army is superior.
And where are the Pāṇḍavas superior,
where inferior?

5 You know how these armies
are differently assessed.
You know dharma-and-artha.
Advise me frankly
which army will lose
if the war takes place."

6 "I cannot," said Sañjaya,
"reveal this in secret,
and merit censure, O rājā.
Let Gāndhārī be present,
and our venerable parent,
mahā-strict-vowed Vyāsa.

7 Their presence will assure me,
O Indra-among-men.
They have dharma and prescience.
Let them hear the plans
of Keśava-Krishna
and Pārtha-Arjuna."

8 Gāndhārī and Vyāsa were quickly escorted
into the sabhā,
where they were respectfully greeted
by Vidura.

9 Realising what the intentions were of Sañjaya
and his son Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
mahā-wise born-on-an-island
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipayana Vyāsa said:

10 "Dhṛtarāṣṭra is curious.
Tell him, O Sañjaya,
what he wants to know.
Tell all that you know
of Arjuna, and Krishna,
Vasudeva's son."

## SECTION SIXTY-EIGHT

1 "Arjuna and Vasudeva's son Krishna,"
said Sañjaya,
"are excellent bowmen,
born for the world's welfare.

2 Māyā surrounds the *cakra* of Vāsudeva-Krishna.
Though five cubits in diameter,
he can hurl it in any size he wishes;
O radiant lord.

3 It is refulgent,
but invisible to the Kauravas.
It gauges a foe's weaknesses.
The Pāṇḍavas are proud of it.

4 The mahā-powerful descendant of Madhu,
Krishna,
conquered in battle Naraka, Śambara,
Kaṁsa and Cedi.

5 Puruṣottama-Krishna has an ātman
that, by sheer willing,
can subjugate the earth, the sky,
and heaven.

6 You have repeatedly interrogated me, O rājā,
regarding the weaknesses and strengths
of the Pāṇḍavas
Briefly, therefore, listen –

7 If the whole world were on one side,
and people-punishing Janārdana-Krishna
on the other, the strength of Janārdana-Krishna
would surpass the world's strength.

8 The whole world cannot reduce Janārdana-Krishna
to ashes,
but Janārdana Krishna can reduce the world
to ashes.

9 Where dharma, truth, simplicity
and humility are,
Govinda-Krishna is.
And where Krishna is, victory is.

10 Puruṣottama-Krishna, Janārdana-Krishna,
the innermost ātman of all,
sustains, as if playfully,
earth, sky, and heaven.

11 Bewildering the worlds,
Krishna makes the Pāṇḍavas
his instruments to destroy your foolish,
delighting-in-adharma sons.

12 With ātman-yoga, Bhagavān Keśava-Krishna
revolves the wheel of Kāla,
the whirling world-wheel,
and the yuga-wheel,

13 He is the lord of Kāla, the single Bhagavān,
the lord of death,
the lord of this whirling world.
This is the truth.

14 Though lord of the world, Hari-Krishna,
this supreme mahā-yogī
is always active, like a villager
tilling his field.

15 This is the māyā of Keśava-Krishna
that bewilders the worlds,
but it does not bewilder
those who have realised him.

## SECTION SIXTY-NINE

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked: "How is it
that you know Mādhava-Krishna
to be lord of the worlds, and I don't?
Tell me that, Sañjaya."

2 Sañjaya said: "Rājā, listen.
You do not have the insight.
I have it. No one grasps Keśava-Krishna
without that insight.

3 My insight reveals Madhusūdana-Krishna to me
as the three-in-one –
he is the creator of all beings,
but himself uncreated."

4 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "What kind of Madhūsudana-bhakti
do you have
that reveals Janārdana Krishna as three-in-one,
O son of Gavalgaṇa?"

5 Sañjaya said: "May you prosper!
I am free from māyā,
I reject irrelevant dharmas.
My Janārdana-bhakti is based
on purity of mind
and knowledge of the śāstras."

6 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"Duryodhana, serve Hṛṣīkeśa-Janārdana-Krishna.
*Tāta*, dear son, Sañjaya seeks our welfare.
Seek refuge with Keśava-Krishna."

7 Duryodhana said: "Devakī's son Krishna
may be the world-Bhagavān
who helps Arjuna,
but I will not serve Keśava-Krishna."

8 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Gāndhārī,
your ill-ātmaned ill-minded son is doomed.
His arrogance prevents him from listening
to excellent advice."

9 Gāndhārī said: "O wicked-ātmaned one,
you who reject
and advice of your elders,
who spurn your father and mother,
you will fall
from your enormous arrogance,

10 You will enhance the joy of your foes,
and swell my grief;
you will remember your father's words
when Bhīma strikes."

11 Vyāsa said, "Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, listen to me,
Krishna loves you.
The excellent envoy Sañjaya
desires your welfare.

12 He knows the ancient and exalted person
of Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna.
Listen to him carefully,
and be free from your mahā-fears.

13 Son of Vicitravīrya, rapture and anger
surround and trap mortals.
The fools who are discontented
with their prosperity

14 Are victims of kāma and are born
again and again under Yama's influence.
Their karma is like that of
the blind leading the blind.

15 The only path worth following
is that of the wise man;
for his excellence overcomes death
and attains the sublime."

16 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: Tell me, Sañjaya,
of that path that holds no fears
and leads to Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna
and fulfilment."

17 Sañjaya replied: "The man without control
of his ātman
cannot know Janārdana-Krishna
who is in control of his ātman.
To perform rituals without sense-discipline
is not the path.

18 Renunciation of the kāma
produced by the excited senses
comes from humility. Humility and ahiṁsā
spring from knowledge.

19 Therefore, be alert,
and learn to control your senses.
O rājā, keep the mind error-free,
let nothing distract you.

20 Learned Brahmins know that sense-control
is real knowledge,
and real knowledge is the path
of intelligent men.

21 Keśava-Krishna cannot be grasped by those
whose senses are not controlled!
Yoga and sacred study
lead to that truth."

## SECTION SEVENTY

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Tell me again, Sañjaya,
about the glory of Puṇḍarīkākṣa,
the lotus-eyed one whose name
is Puruṣottama."

2 Sañjaya said: "Rājā, listen.
You do not have the knowledge.
I have it. No one grasps Keśava-Krishna
without that knowledge.

3 He swaddles all creatures
as Vasu the Swaddler;
he is Deva the Deity
because of his divine birth.
He is Viṣṇu the Preserver
because he preserves all.

4 He is Madhusūdana
the slayer of the anti-god Madhu.
From *madhu* or honey he is Madhuha
the All-Truthed Sweetness.
His asceticism, meditation, and yoga
make him Mādhava.

5 *Kṛṣ* denotes existence,
and *ṇa* denotes total serenity;
hence Kṛṣṇa of the Vṛṣṇis,
manifestation of Viṣṇu.

6 *Puṇḍarīka* is the place of ultimate refuge;
and *akṣa* means undeteriorating –
hence Puṇḍarīkākṣa, also the Lotus-Eyed One.
He is Janārdana
the Smiter of Mortals,
from *jana*-mortals and *ardana*-smiter.

7 He is Sātvata the True-Essence,
from *sattva*-truth;
he is Vṛṣabhekṣaṇ
the Revealed through the Vedas,
from *ārṣa* the Vedas,
and *ikṣaṇa* meaning eyes.

8 He is Aja the Birthless because the foe-destroyer
was born marvellously.
He shines with the self-created splendour,
*udara,* of the gods,
and he is self-controlled, *dāma* –
for which reason
he is known as Dāmodara.

9 He is the lord, *īśa*, of felicity, *hṛṣīka*;
therefore, he is Hṛṣīkeśa.
Because he supports
earth and sky
with his two arms, he is Mahābāhu
the Mighty-Armed.

10 He neither falls – *adho* –
nor does he deteriorate *kṣīyate* –
therefore he is Adhokṣaja.
He is the refuge – *ayaṇa* –
of mortals – *nara* –
so the *smṛtis* call him Nārāyaṇa.

11 He is all-fullness, primal Puruṣa,
and *uttama*, super-excelling;
hence he is Puruṣottama
the Excellent Puruṣa
in whom existence and non-existence
are harmonised.

12 He is Sarva the All
because he has insight into all.
Krishna is based on truth,
and truth is based on Krishna.

13 Krishna is truth-produced truth;
hence he is known as Satya or Truth.
His power pervades the worlds –
he is Viṣṇu the Pervader.
He is also Jiṣṇu
the All-Victorious.

14 He is Ananta the unending
because he is eternal;
he controls the senses –
hence Govinda, Keeper of the Cows.
He can make the unreal seem real,
which bewilders mortals.

15 This is the glory of the dharma-abiding
slayer of Madhu.
Undeteriorating Mahābāhu will come here
to prevent needless slaughter."

## SECTION SEVENTY-ONE

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"O Sañjaya, I wish
I had eyes like others
to see the glory
of Vāsudeva-Krishna
pervading the worlds,

2 Advising the Sṛñjayas
with beautiful words
of exceptional truth,
accepted by seekers
of calm, but displeasing
to those facing death.

3 The chief of the Yādavas,
the bull brave Yādava
is untiring Krishna,
the slayer of foes,
the spreader of terror
among self-glorifiers.

4 My Kaurava sons
will hear the words
of foe-crushing Krishna,
the Vṛṣṇi mahātmā,
and see how they charm
the kings on their side.

5 That ṛṣi eternal,
that ṛṣi illumined
whose ocean of speech
is sipped by ascetics,
the *ariṣṭa*-bird
is exquisite plumage,
the solace of creatures,
the saviour of those
who go to their deaths.

6 The thousand-headed one,
the ancient Purusa,
unbeginning, without middle,

unending, unfading,
the seed, the sublime –
I pray for his refuge.

7 The wondrous creator
of the worlds and the gods
and the anti-gods and Nāgas,
of rākṣasas and rulers,
Indra's younger brother –
I pray for his refuge."

## SECTION SEVENTY-TWO

1 Janamejaya asked: "What did my ancestors
the Pāṇḍavas do
after Sañjaya returned to the Kauravas?
I want to know."

2 Vaiśampāyana replied: After Sañjaya departed,
dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
approached Arjuna, Bhīma,
the twin sons of Mādrī,
Virāṭa, Drupada, the Kekayas,
and other chariot-heroes,

3 And said to them: "Let us approach
the conch-*cakra*-and-mace-wielder Krishna
and ask him
to go to the Kauravas.

4 Let him go and persuade them
to accept peace,
and advise Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Bāhlīka and others
not to fight.

5 This should be our chief and primary concern."
Pleased
with Yudhiṣṭhira's suggestion,
they approached Janārdana-Krishna.

6 The bull-brave rājās, eager to prevent
unnecessary bloodshed,
went in a body to Krishna,
like gods soliciting Marutvan-Indra.

7 Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira approached
the bull-brave Dāśārha, Janārdana-Krishna,
the excellent Satvata chief,
and said to him:

8 "It is time now for friends
to show they are friends.
You are our friend.
No one else can solve our problem.

9 Because you supported us, O Mādhava-Krishna,
we have fearlessly asked
for the restoration of our kingdom
from arrogant Duryodhana.

10 You have always seen the Vṛṣṇis
through their difficulties.
The Pāṇḍavas need your help.
See them through theirs."

11 Śrī Bhagavān replied: "Mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira,
I am listening. Speak freely.
I will help you in this matter,
O Bharata."

12 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "You have heard, Krishna,
what Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his son
are planning.
Sañjaya's words are correct.

13 Sañjaya is like Dhṛtarāṣṭra's ātman,
and knows his innermost thoughts.
An envoy speaks
only on behalf of his master –
or else he deserves
to be executed.

14 Peace – but no restoration of kingdom!
Besides, possessiveness
makes the wicked monarch biased
when he should be impartial.

15 We have endured forest exile
for twelve years;
and, on Dhṛtarāṣṭra's order,
another year in disguise.

16 All this so that our pledges
should remain honoured, O *prabhu*-lord!
The Brahmins with us know
we never broke our word, Krishna.

17 The avaricious rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
is blind to his own dharma.
Blinded by fondness for his son,
he acts like a fool.

18 He listens to the advice of Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
and his greed, Janārdana-Krishna,
makes him doubledeal with us
just to please himself.

19 What could be more sad than that I,
Janārdana-Krishna,
cannot be of any help to my mother
and my friends?

20 I asked for only five villages
though I have you, O Govinda-Krishna,
the Kāśis, Cedis, Pāñcālas, and Matsyas
supporting me.

21 Avisthala, Vṛksthala, Mākandi, Vāraṇāvata,
And any other village as the fifth –

22 Give us these five villages or towns
so that we may live there.
We do not want the Bharatas
ruined.

23 And even this ill-ātmaned Duryodhana
refused,
believing that he owns the whole world.
What a great humiliation!

24 A well-born man's greed for others' wealth
negates his discrimination.
When greed destroys discrimination,
shame also deserts a senile old man.

25 Shame gone, dharma goes;
dharma gone, prosperity goes;
prosperity gone, dignity goes;
and loss of dignity is poverty indeed.

26 Friends, relatives, and Brahmins desert<br>
a wealthless man, O Krishna,<br>
like birds deserting<br>
a flowerless and fruitless tree.

27 My relatives desert me<br>
as if I am a fallen man,<br>
like life-breath deserting a corpse,<br>
*Tāta*! My friend! What is this but death?

28 Śambara held the view that nothing in life<br>
was worse for a man<br>
than facing the possibility<br>
of a foodless tomorrow.

29 It is said wealth is the basic dharma;<br>
all depends on wealth.<br>
The wealthy truly live in the world,<br>
the unwealthy are dead.

30 Those who forcibly take away<br>
the wealth of a man<br>
take away his chances<br>
of dharma-artha-and-kāma.

31 Some in such a condition choose to die;<br>
others run to villages;<br>
others to forests;<br>
others attempt suicide.

32 Some go mad;<br>
others fall in their enemies' clutches;<br>
still others become slaves<br>
and hope to be wealthy again.

33 To be poor is terrible.<br>
It is worse than actual death.<br>
It takes away the source<br>
of a man's dharma-and-kāma.

34 A dharma-ordained death<br>
is part of the process of life.<br>
All creatures are subject<br>
to such a natural death.

[V:72:35-43]

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35 A man born wealthless
suffers much less
than a man who is deprived
of customary luxury and joy.

36 Even if he alone is responsible
for his deprivation,
he will blame Indra and the gods
and not himself.

37 All his knowledge of the śāstras
will not reduce his suffering.
He berates his servants,
and blames his friends.

38 His outbursts make him even more confused
till, driven by folly,
he gets involved
in cruel karma.

39 Such ill karma leads to intermixture
of the castes.
Such intermixture is the height of vice,
and leads to hell.

40 If he does not awake soon, Krishna,
he goes to hell.
Only wisdom wakes; only wisdom's eye
can save him.

41 Wisdom will direct this man
to study of the śāstras.
So he re-discovers dharma,
whose fruit is humility.

42 Humility makes him renounce misdeeds.
and he regains dignity.
The greater a man's dignity,
the greater is the man.

43 The dharma-firm serene ātman
dedicated to the yoga of action,
never thinks of adharma,
never turns to vice.

44 The fool without humility
is the shame of humankind.
He has no claim to dharma;
he is like a Śūdra.

45 The man with humility pleases the gods,
the *pitṛs*, and his own ātman.
He attains the non-death *amṛta*
of good karma.

46 And you, O Madhusūdana-Krishna,
have seen all this happen to me –
you have seen the way I have lived
after losing my kingdom.

47 We will on no account give up
our dignity.
Far better to die in an attempt
to recover it.

48 The best idea obviously is to share
a common prosperity –
we and they united in peace and mutual dignity,
O Mādhava-Krishna.

49 It would be heinous karma to profit
after their destruction,
to enjoy the kingdom after killing
all the Kauravas.

50 Wrong also to kill those unrelated to us
who have dishonourably joined them; –
how much worse
to kill relatives!

51 So many close relatives!
So many gurus on both sides!
It is heinous to kill them.
There is no glory in war.

52 Kṣatriya-dharma can be barbarous.
We are born Ksatriyas.
This is our sva-dharma.
Anything else would be adlurma.

53 A Śūdra serves,
a Vaiśya lives by commerce,
we are enjoined to kill,
a Brahmin lives on alms.

54 Kṣatriya kills Kṣatriya,
fish feeds on fish, dogs, eats dog.
Each to its our dharma,
O Dāśārha-Krishna.

55 War is nothing but Kali;
countless lives are wasted in war, Krishna.
One fights according to plan,
but victory or defeat

56 Is uncertain, just as one cannot predict
life or death.
Joy and sorrow appear only
at their appointed times.

57 One man may kill many;
many together may kill one.
A coward may kill a famous, valiant,
tested hero.

58 Both cannot win, both cannot lose;
but waste and loss harm both.
The deserter loses
honour and life.

59 So war is an absolute evil.
Who doesn't hit back at violence?
But what's victory or defeat to the dead,
O Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna?

60 I think defeat is not much better
than death, Krishna,
because the victor also has to suffer
grievously.

61 Some who are dear to him
are sure to be killed.
Enfeebled by the loss
of his sons and brothers,

62 Krishna, he will live on in a state
of semi-consciousness and dejection,
The gentle, humble, compassionate,
dignified, and wise

63 Are indiscriminately slaughtered;
the vicious escape, Janārdana-Krishna.
After enemies are butchered,
remorse afflicts the victor.

64 Those who survive organise revenge
by assembling an army
designed to wipe out
the victor.

65 Some resort to assassination as a means
of solving the problem.
Victory breeds hatred,
the vanquished live in misery.

66 Only rejection of thoughts of victory or defeat
brings peace.
A man who makes an enemy
lives in fear.

67 He sleeps in a snake-infested house,
because he never has peace of mind.
The foe-annihilator
earns no fame;

68 He gets its opposite all his life
from other men.
No matter how long it is fought,
a war never ends.

69 A single survivor in an enemy's family
will tell the story of his defeat forever.
Hate is not quenched by hate,
Keśava-Krishna.

70 Hate fans hate, as ghee feeds the sacred fire.
Krishna! The only peace possible
is by total extermination
of either party.

71 There are always weaknesses
that can be taken advantage of;
there are always opportunists
waiting to be exploited.

72 Confidence in his prowess
gnaws at the secret heart
of a defeated foe.
Indeed, peace is available
only by renouncing war,
or by accepting one's own death.

73 It is possible to root out our foes
and so achieve our purpose,
but this, Madusūdana-Krishna,
is a savage strategy.

74 We can get peace by giving up our claim
to the kingdom,
but that is to accept failure;
nor will they trust our words.

75 We will not surrender our claim,
nor do we want
the family destroyed.
Conciliation might be a way out.

76 It is only when all attempts at peace,
by those who want their kingdom peacefully,
when all attempts fail,
that violence should replace reason.

77 For if reason fails to achieve
peaceful settlement,
fierce consequences follow. Look, say the paṇḍits,
at two dogs fighting –

78 First the tail-wagging, then the barking,
the counter-barking,
the twisting, the teeth-baring, snarling,
then the biting.

79 The stronger dog wins,
and devours the loser's flesh.
It's the same with humans.
No real difference whatsoever.

80 The strong should avoid seeking confrontation
with the weak,
and the weak should make it a point
to respect the strong,

81 A rājā, a father, an elder
should be respected always.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra deserves our pūjā-respect,
O Janārdana-Krishna.

82 He happens to be excessively fond
of his son.
He dotes on his son,
and spurns our overtures.

83 What do you think, Krishna,
should be done by us?
How will I not stray from artha, and dharma,
O Mādhava?

84 Madhusūdana-Krishna-Puruṣottama,
who else is there but you
to whom we can turn
in our dilemma?

85 Who else is there, Krishna,
who is such a dear friend,
who knows so well human actions
and their consequences?"

86 Janārdana-Krishna replied to Dharmarāja
(continued Vaiśampāyana):
"For the welfare of both,
I will go to the Kaurava camp.

87 If I am able to arrange a peace, O rājā,
without sacrificing our claim,
I will have performed
a mahā-meritorious act.

88 I will have released the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas
from death's noose,
and saved from ruin this earth
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons."

89 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "I feel uneasy
about your going to the Kauravas.
Duryodhana will never listen
to your good advice.

90 It does not seem right
that you should go and plead
before the Kṣatriya rulers
who follow Duryodhana's lead.

91 If anything should happen to you,
O Mādhava-Krishna,
it will nullify any good achieved,
even lordship over the gods."

92 Śrī Bhagavān replied: "Mahārāja,
I know Duryodhana's criminal character.
But we will earn blame in all the worlds
for not trying.

93 All the world's rulers together
are not strong enough
to face my wrath.
They cringe like beasts before a lion.

94 If they insult me who only desires
their welfare,
I have decided I will destroy
all the Kauravas.

95 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,
my going will not be fruitless.
At least none will blame us
for not trying."

96 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "So let it be, Krishna.
May good follow.
Go to the Kauravas. Return successful
and in good health.

97 Go to the Kauravas,
and arrange a peace with them
that will enable all the Bharatas
to be happy, O *prabhu*-lord.

98 You are a brother and loved-and-loving
*sakhā*-friend to me and Bībhatsu-Arjuna.
We depend on you.
May you, who wish us well, succeed.

99 You know us, and you know our foes.
You know our interests, you are eloquent.
Suyodhana-Duryodhana
may still be persuaded.

100 Your dharma-based words, meant well,
may lead to conciliation or to conflict.
It does not matter –
say them, Keśava-Krishna."

## SECTION SEVENTY-THREE

1 Śrī Bhagavān Krishna said: I have listened
to Sañjaya's words and yours.
I know their proposals,
I know yours.

2 Your proposals are based on dharma,
theirs on hatred.
You are determined to negotiate
rather than fight.

3 But this is not the way of a Kṣatriya,
O lord of the world.
Everyone knows that a Kṣatriya
does not beg for favours.

4 The Creator has ordained victory or death
as the eternal sva-dharma
of a Kṣatriya.
We do not have to abnegate ourselves.

5 Survival through cowardice is no way of living,
Yudhiṣṭhira.
Be brave, foe-chastiser,
and vanquish your enemies!

6 The exceedingly avaricious Duryodhana
has for too long
enjoyed the friendship and support
of other rulers.

7 Peace with the Kauravas is neither possible
nor desirable, O lord of the world.
Because they have Bhīṣma, Kṛpa, Droṇa,
they feel they are invincible.

8 As long as you continue your policy
of conciliation, O foe-crushing rājā,
they will refuse you your right
to your kingdom.

9 Neither kindness, nor weakness,
nor desire for dharma-and-artha
will influence Duryodhana
to your ways, O foe-crusher.

10 As proof of this – consider, O Pāṇḍava,
have they expressed sorrow
that you suffer and have to wear
a *kaupina* lion-cloth?

11 Grandfather Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
wise Vidura,
the Brahmins, the sādhus, the rājā,
the whole city,

12 And all the chiefs of the Kauravas
saw you,
who are gentle, kind, disciplined,
and full of dharma,

13 Deceitfully tricked in the dice-game
by Duryodhana,
who was not even ashamed
of this despicable deed, O rājā.

14 O Bharata rājā! Do not seek friendly relations
with such a man.
He deserves death from all –
and certainly from you.

15 He referred to you insultingly,
mocking you,
your brothers and those younger to you,
and boasting,

16 He said: 'The sons of Pāṇḍu
have nothing.
Their names – their family's *gotra* –
will soon be wiped out.

17 And in time to come,
they will be totally crushed.
Their majesty will be mine,
their power pulverised."

18 While the dice-game was being played,
ill-ātmaned Duḥśāsana
dared to touch
husband-deserted Draupadī,

19 And dragged her by her hair
inside the rājā-filled sabhā;
she was weeping and they called her 'Cow'
in front to Bhīṣma;

20 And you held back your enormously
powerful brothers
with dharma's noose, and they remained
completely passive.

21 He uttered these filthy words
and openly rejoiced
when you and your brothers
were sent to forest exile.

22 Many in the sabhā choked back
their tears,
knowing that you were suffering
without cause.

23 The rājās and the Brahmins
did not applaud him,
and many of the courtiers in the sabhā
criticised Duryodhana.

24 To a highborn person
blame is a form of death.
Death is preferable to a life
loaded with blame, O rājā.

25 Mahārāja, it could be said
that Duryodhana died
when in the sabhā
the rājās denounced him.

26 A man with a character like that
is easily killed,
like a tree that stands only
on one weak root.

27 That vicious-minded wretch is a snake
that deserves to be killed.
Kill him, O foe-slaying rājā.
Don't hesitate.

28 It is proper however that you honour
king Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
who is like a father to you, and Bhīṣma.
I recommend this, O blameless Yudhiṣṭhira.

29 I will go, O rājā, and remove the doubts of men
who are still undecided
about the character
of Duryodhana.

30 I will, among all those rājās,
put before them
what I consider are your merits –
and your defects.

31 When they hear me speak
on dharma-and-artha,
all the earth-rulers,
the lords of different states,

32 Will realise that you are a dharmātmā,
firm in truth-speaking,
and that Duryodhana is a person
blinded by greed.

33 I will expose his defects
to towns and villages,
before young and old,
before all the four castes.

34 No one will charge you with adharma
for advocating peace;
the earth-rulers will blame the Kauravas
and Duryodhana.

35 Deserted by them,
Duryodhana is doomed, O rājā.
Nothing will be left for you to do.
Let us act now.

36 I will go to the Kauravas,
observe their preparations,
and serve your cause
without sacrificing your interests.

37 Noting their plans and war preparations,
I will return, O Bharata,
and make sure
that you emerge victorious.

38 As far as I can see,
war indeed is inevitable.
All the omens seem to point
in that direction.

39 Birds and beasts scream,
and horses and elephants
appear as horrifying
as approach of night.
Even fire puts on shapes
of horrendous apparitions.

40 If the doom of the world
and the ruin of man
were not on hand,
these would not be so.
Get ready your helmets,
your chariots and elephants;

41 Instruct all your soldiers
to stand on alert, O Indra-
among-men, with horses
and chariots and elephants.
Make all preparations
for the forthcoming battle.

42 Duryodhana will never
agree to return
the tiniest portion
of your kingdom he stole
in the past by defeating
you in the dice-game."

## SECTION SEVENTY-FOUR

1 Bhīma said:
"Speak to them, Madhusūdana-Krishna,
so that peace can be worked out.
Do not threaten them with war.

2 Duryodhana is vindictive, irascible,
suspicious of good,
and mahā-self-important.
He needs to be carefully tackled.

3 He is by nature inclined to vice,
his mind is that of a robber;
he is an arrogant
Pāṇḍava-hater.

4 He is cruel and malicious;
he has no foresight;
he delights in misdeed,
he is wicked-ātmaned.

5 He will die rather than bend
or change his views.
It is very difficult to negotiate peace
with his type, O Krishna.

6 He will not listen to the advice
of well-wishers;
he is a liar, he has no dharma,
he rejects goodness.

7 He follows the evil impulses
of his nature;
he is as unreliable as a snake
in the grass.

8 You already know all about Duryodhana,
his habits, his prowess,
the strength and composition
of his army.

9 Long ago we and the Kauravas
were playful cousin-brothers,
delighting in games,
like the gods with Indra.

10 But now the malice of Duryodhana,
O Madhusūdana-Krshna,
will cause Bharata ruin, as a forest is razed
by a fire in winter.

11 There are eighteen rājās, Madhusudana-Krishna,
who became infamous
because they exterminated their relatives,
friends and well-wishers.

12 When Dharma was declining,
Kali took birth,
with radiant energy,
among the great anti-gods;

13 As did Mudāvarta among the Haihayas,
Janamejaya among the Nīpas,
Bahula among the Tālajaṅghas,
Vasu among Kṛmis,

14 Ajabindu among the Suvīras,
Ruṣarddhika among the Surāṣṭras,
Arkaja among the Balīhas,
Dhautamūlaka among the Cīnas,

15 Hayagrīva among the Videhas,
Varayu among the Mahaujas,
Bāhu among the Sundaravaṁśas,
Pururavas among the Dīptākṣas,

16 Sahaja among Cedis and Matsyas,
Vṛṣadhavaja among the Pravīras,
Dhāraṇa among the Candravatsas,
Vigāhana among the Mukuṭas,

17 And Śama among the Nandivegas.
Krishna, these wicked persons
were born at each yuga's end
to destroy their own race.

18 At the end of this yuga of Kāla,
Duryodhana has been born
among the Kauravas – a vicious creature,
to destroy his race.

19 That is why he needs the gentlest language
of dharma-and-artha,
so that he may be subtly persuaded
to accept our plan.

20 Krishna, we would prefer to be led
by Duryodhana
and be his subjects
than see the Bharatas exterminated.

21 O Vāsudeva-Krishna,
let alienation continue
between us and the Kauravas,
but see that the Bharatas are saved.

22 Our grandfather Bhīṣma
and the elderly sabhā-members
should be persuaded;
brothers should remain brothers, Krishna.

23 This is my opinion.
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira endorses it.
Arjuna is a kind man;
Arjuna does not want war either."

SECTION SEVENTY-FIVE

1 Mahā-muscled Keśava-Krishna was pleased
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
with these gentle words
that came from Bhīma,

2 Because they were as unexpected
as coolth in fire,
and fragility in a mountain:
Śārṅga-wielding Krishna inspired Vṛkodara

3 Wolf-waisted Bhīma
with wind-fanned flame-words;
he said to the seated
and suddenly sentimental Bhīma:

4 "Bhīma, you were always
a great one for war.
You revelled at the prospect of killing
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's cruel sons.

5 You are never asleep,
your head is always half-slumbering;
you always speak fearful and angry words
of war.

6 When you are roused,
your breath is hot like fire;
your restless mind
is like a smoky flame.

7 You sit apart and sigh like a feeble,
heavy-burdened man,
and those who do not know you
think you are insane.

8 You groan and sigh,
and heave like an elephant,
trampling underfoot the trees
he uproots.

9 You do not like to mix with others,
you prefer to be alone:
nothing by night or day
seems to please you, O Pāṇḍava.

10 You impulsively laugh;
or, alone, you sit and weep.
You sit, eyes closed, head between knees,
for hours.

11 You contract your eyebrows and bite your lips,
Bhīma,
and stare vacantly at things.
Your nervous anger makes you so.

12 'As surely as the sun rising
in the radiant east,
as surely as it sets after revolving
round the Dhruva pole-star,

13 I will kill Duryodhana
with one blow of my mace.
This I promise!
This promise I will not break!'

14 That was your oath in the presence
of your brothers, O foe-crusher.
And now suddenly you are attracted
to peace-making.

15 Aho! If fear can affect you,
surely it will unnerve those
who are preparing
for the battle.

16 Aho! It must be that,
asleep or awake,
you see inauspicious omens.
Or why would you preach peace?

17 Aho! You are like a eunuch,
you are not manly.
Fear overpowers you, so you swerve
from right action.

18 Fear grips your heart,
despair fills your mind,
trembling seizes your thighs.
That is why you desire peace.

19 Kuntī's son, the minds of mortals
are as fickle and unstable
as a *śālmali*-treee
swaying in the wind.

20 Your resolve is as unnatural
as a cow speaking.
The other Pāṇḍavas will drown
without a raft.

21 That Bhīma should espouse
such un-Bhīma-like sentiments
is as incredible
as a mountain shifting position.

22 Remember your karma and the family
in which you were born,
and stand up. Discard despair!
Steady yourself, brave Bharata!

23 Your depression doesn't become you at all,
O foe-annihilator.
A Kṣatriya keeps only that
which wins by force."

## SECTION SEVENTY-SIX

1 The quickly-retaliating, always-roused Bhīma,
stirred by Vāsudeva-Krishna's words
shook himself like a horse,
and said:

2 "You misunderstand me, Acyuta-Krishna,
because I seem to be acting differently.
But I am cheerfully ready for war,
believe me.

3 This you know. Or can it be, Dāśārha-Krishna,
that you do not know me yet,
like a swimmer floundering
in a too-deep lake?

4 Or why would you criticise me,
Mādhava-Krishna,
with words that do not apply to me?
Who, knowing me as Bhīmasena,

5 Would even dare to humilate me
as you have done?
O favoured one of the Vṛṣṇis,
let me tell you this

6 About my manliness and my strength
which none equals.
It is not honourable ever for a man
to praise himself,

7 But your misjudgement forces me
to speak about my prowess.
Look, Krishna, at creature-producing
earth and heaven,

8 Both fixed, enormous, infinite,
and all-mothering –
if these two, roused, were to collide
like two hills,

9 I could with my arms keep them
and their prolific creatures apart.
Look at the giant circle
my arms can form!

10 Which creatures, trapped inside them,
can hope to survive?
The thunder-wielding Bala-slayer Indra,
the Himavant, the vast ocean –

11 The combined strength of these three
cannot save my victim.
The battle-eager Kṣatriyas
who confront us Pāṇḍavas –

12 I will hurl them on the earth
and trample on them!
You are not entirely unaware of my prowess,
Acyuta-Krishna,

13 And how I used it to subjugate
numerous rājās.
But if you really do not know
my sun-bright strength,

14 You will find it demonstrated
on the field of battle.
Your words hurt me, Janārdana-Krishna
like opening a festering wound.

15 In fact, I am stronger even
than what I claim.
When the dreadful battle starts,
you will see.

16 You will see me crushing elephants,
horses and chariots,
you will see me furiously slaughter
the bull-brave Kṣatriyas.

17 You and the world will see me slice
through warrior-ranks.
My marrow is not soft,
my mind is not infirm.

18 I do not fear even if all the worlds
are ranged against me.
I am moved to fellow-feeling out of pity,
Madhusūdana-Krishna.
I do not want the Bharatas wiped out,
so I show kindness."

## SECTION SEVENTY-SEVEN

1 "I was only sounding you," said Krishna,
"not blaming you.
I was not motivated by anger,
I was not trying
to be a paṇḍit, not analysing you,
I feel for you.

2 I know you are a mahātmā,
I know you are strong,
I am aware of your prowess.
I was not denouncing you.

3 Whatever good you think you can do
for the Pāṇḍavas,
I am sure you can do that
a thousand times over.

4 You, your friends and well-wishers
are what you should be,
born in families pūjā-respected
by rājās.

5 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
human dharma and god-dharma
are different. To equate the two
is to be confused.

6 What leads to a man's prosperity
may also lead to his ruin.
That is the nature
of human karma.

7 The karma recommended by wise men
can have consequences
opposite to those expected,
the wind suddenly shifting direction.

8 Indeed, fate may ordain that the karma
of a well-advised,
justice-seeking, non-harming man
has quite the opposite results.

9 And it is possible for man to overcome
the effects of some
external circumstances such as cold and heat,
hunger and thirst.

10 Many examples can be found
of human beings
over-riding their karma,
in the manner of free agents.

11 Free or otherwise, karma is the only way for man,
O Pāṇḍava Bhīma!
Know this and act, and leave fruit
to fate and freewill.

12 The man who acts in this belief
is not delighted if he succeeds
nor depressed
if he fails.

13 That was what I meant, O Bhīmasena;
I did not mean
that victory would be ours in a war
against our foes.

14 I say all this to you,
because I want you to know
that even a worrying man should have hope
and not get desolated.

15 Early in the morning I will go
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and try to work out a peace
honourable to you.

16 If they agree to a peace,
I will earn endless fame,
your hopes will be fulfilled
and you will prosper.

17 If they are stubborn and refuse
to compromise,
a heinous war will decimate
the Kauravas.

18 The major responsibility in this war
will be yours and Arjuna's.
Others will have only
minor burdens.

19 I will be the driver
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's chariot
because dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
wishes it, not because I am averse to fighting.

20 That is why I tried to re-inspire your energy,
Vṛkodara-Bhīma;
I felt the words you were speaking
were those of a eunuch's."

SECTION SEVENTY-EIGHT

1 Arjuna said: "I think that Yudhiṣṭhira
has said all that is necessary.
After listening to you,
O foe-smiting Janārdana-Krishna,

2 I feel you think peace
is going to be difficult to achieve –
either because Dhṛtarāṣṭra is greedy, *prabhu*-lord,
or because we are weak.

3 You give the impression that strength
by itself is futile,
and that karma impels men
into fruitful deeds.

4 You may be right,
and you may not be right.
But there is nothing in this world
that is impossible.

5 You say our fallen state prevents
real peace-making.
But they caused it – and they don't seem to suffer
any ill fruits.

6 If we go about it properly, *prabhu*-lord,
we are sure to succeed.
Take the right steps, Krishna,
and peace will be attained.

7 You are the finest well-wisher
the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas could have,
as Prajāpati is to the gods
and anti-gods.

8 Help us both. Working out our welfare
should not prove difficult for you.
It is a task
that is worth doing.

9 This task worth doing, Janārdana-Krishna,
will be successfully accomplished by you
when you meet the Kauravas,
Janārdana-Krishna.

10 If you have other plans
for ill-ātmaned Duryodhana,
you will know best. Peace or otherwise –
your decision is final.

11 Whatever you decide as the mature plan
of action is agreeable to us.
Krishna! Ill-ātmaned Duryodhana and his lot
deserve to die.

12 When they saw Śrī, goddess of prosperity,
favour Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
when they found no dharma to help them,
Madhusūdana-Krishna,

13 They deceived us by the malicious means
of the dice-game.
Is there any Kṣatriya-born wielder
of the bow

14 Who, when challenged, refuses to fight,
though death face him?
Defeated by adharma, dispossessed,
wandering in the forest,

15 I vowed to kill Suyodhana-Duryodhana
after my exile, O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna.
Your good intentions for your friends
are understandable, Krishna,

16 But how can they be achieved
by gentle means?
If it is necessary to destroy them,
then do it immediately,
without giving it
any more thought.

17 You know how vicious-minded Duryodhana
insulted Draupadī in the sabhā,
and how I chafed
but bore it patiently.

18 I cannot see how the same Duryodhana
will now treat us Pāṇḍavas nobly.
Advising him is like casting seed
on barren ground, Mādhava-Krishna.

19 That is why I urge you to act
expeditiously
in this matter of helping us.
Urgency is essential, Vārṣṇeya-Krishna."

## SECTION SEVENTY-NINE

1 "O māhā-muscled Pāṇḍava Arjuna," said Krishna,
"you are right.
I will act quickly for the Pāṇḍava
and Kaurava good.

2 Peace or war is now in my hands,
O dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna.
It is human karma that waters
and unweeds the soil,

3 But no crops will grow without rain,
O Kuntī's son.
Therefore, one should make provision
for man-made irrigation.

4 And yet, droughts can occur, brought on
by entirely external circumstances.
That being so,
the mahātmās in the past

5 Pronounced that success involves a mix
of circumstance and human exertion.
I will do
what is humanly possible;

6 I simply cannot alter what is dictated
by circumstance.
Ill-minded Duryodhana
has openly discarded dharma,

7 And he feels no sense of shame
for what he does,
In his misdeeds he is aided and abetted
by his advisers –

8 Śakuni, the charioteen's son Karṇa,
and his brother Duḥśāsana.
He is against any peace
on the basis of kingdom-partition.

9 Nor does dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira want a peace
that involves surrendering his share.
And ill-minded Duryodhana
will not give it, anyway.

10 What is the point then of conveying
dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's message to him?
What had to be said,
has already been said.

11 Kaurava Duryodhana is absolutely adamant
in this matter;
he would die rather than acquiesce
to our proposal.

12 His refusal will make him deserving of death
at our hands.
You recall
how he harassed you as boys,

13 And how he cruelly tricked you
out of your ancestral kingdom.
Ill-ātmaned Duryodhana cannot bear
seeing Yudhiṣṭhira prosper.

14 He tried to argue me away from you,
O Pārtha-Arjuna,
but I refused to play
his devious game.

15 You know very well, O mahā-muscled one,
Duryodḥana is convinced
I have espoused the cause
of dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

16 You know what he thinks,
and what I think.
Arjuna, why then do you have doubts
about my intentions?

17 You know what has been supremely ordained
by the gods, Pārtha-Arjuna.
How can you think that peace
can be negotiated?

18 In word and in deed, I will do, Pārtha-Arjuna,
all that is in my power to do.
But do not expect peace with them,
O Pāṇḍava.

19 Why wasn't this agreeable peace
sought by Bhīṣma
after they attacked Virāṭa's cattle,
a year ago?

20 The Kauravas lost the war the day
you visualised their defeat.
Suyodhana-Duryodhana will not part
with an iota of land.

21 I will follow the instructions
of dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
after taking into consideration the karma
of ill-ātmaned Duryodhana."

## SECTION EIGHTY

1 Nakula said: "O Mādhava-Krishna,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira understands dharma.
You have heard his words of dharma
and his liberal views

2 Bhīma, agreeing with the rājā,
has spoken about peace
and the prowess of his muscular arms,
O Mādhava-Krishna.

3 You have also listened to Arjuna.
You have presented before us
the substance of your own viewpoint,
O valiant one.

4 Now forget all this,
and ponder the enemy's intentions;
after which, O Puruṣottama-Krishna,
do what you think is best.

5 So many views, so many conflicting opinions!
O Keśava-Krishna!
Success is possible only after one makes
a final decision.

6 A decision arrived at one time
may need changing under different conditions.
What's important is what works,
O foe-crusher.

7 In the forest, we had one view;
in disguise, Krishna, another;
now in the open,
we have still another.

8 While we were wandering about
in forest exile, O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna,
we did not desire our kingdom
as we do now.

9 Now our exile is over, the forest is left behind.
O Janārdana-Krishna!
Through your grace
we have a seven-*akṣauhiṇī* army.

10 There is none who will not be afraid
when he sees
all these heavily-armed tigers-among-men
poised for battle.

11 Speak gently to the Kauravas,
do not agitate foolish Suyodhana-Duryodhana;
use threat of war
as a last resort.

12 Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīmasena, invincible Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
Sahadeva, myself, and, O Keśava-Krishna,

13 The mahā-hero Sātyaki, Virāṭa and his son, Drupada
and his ministers, Dhṛṣṭadyumna, O Mādhāva-Krishna,

14 The powerful rājā of Kāśi, the Cedi ruler –
What mortal of flesh-and-blood dares face these heroes?

15 It seems to me self-evident, O mahā-muscled one,
that you will succeed
in furthering Dharmarāja's objectives
when you are there.

16 O blameless Krishna! Vidura, Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
and Bāhlīka will appreciate
your words of wisdom and their value
for all of us.

17 They can influence
the lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and mischief-bent Suyodhana-Duryodhana
and his followers to obey you.

18 Is there any problem in the world
that will remain insoluble
if you, Janārdana-Krishna, speak
and Vidura agrees to listen?"

## SECTION EIGHTY-ONE

1 "What rājā Yudhiṣṭhira has said
agrees with eternal dharma,"
said Sahadeva. "But I favour war,
O foe-crushing Krishna.

2 Even if the Kauravas want peace
with the Pāṇḍavas,
you should provoke them into war,
O Dāśārha chief.

3 How can I rest without killing
Suyodhana-Duryodhana?
Krishna! I vividly recall the way
he insulted Pāñcāla-Draupadī.

4 Bhīma, Arjuna, and dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
may prefer dharma,
but I will abandon dharma
and decide to go to war."

5 "O mahā-muscled Krishna," said Sātyaki,
"mahā-minded Sahadeva speaks the truth.
My anger and his anger will cool
only with Duryodhana's death.

6 Don't you remember how you felt,
how you were roused
when you saw the Pāṇḍavas
dressed in *ajina*-deerskin?

7 What Mādrī's brave son has openly declared,
Puruṣottama-Krishna,
echoes the feelings of all the warriors
assembled here."

8 Even as mahāminded Sātyaki was saying this
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
a deafening lion-like roar rose
from the warriors.

9 The warriors endorsed his sentiments
shouting *"Sādhu! Sādhu!*
Excellent! Excellent!"
Sātyaki was delighted.

## SECTION EIGHTY-ONE

1 After listening to the rājā's words
of dharma-and-artha,
black-haired Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, sighing with sorrow,
said to Dāśārha-Krishna –

2 Rājā-Drupada's daughter said to Krishna,
after offering pūjā-respect
to Sahadeva
and the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki,

3 And assuming that Bhīma was genuinely
inclined towards peace –
the strong-willed troubled lady said,
with tears welling in her eyes:

4 "O mahā-muscled Madhusūdana-Krishna!
You are wise in dharma.
You know how the Pāṇḍavas were tricked
out of happiness

5 By Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son and his advisers.
O Janārdana-Krishna,
you have heard Sañjaya repeat
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra mantra-message

6 To Yudhiṣṭhira, every single word
that he spoke.
O great Dāśārha hero,
you know what he meant.

7 O mahā-radiant one, our message was simple:
give us five villages –
Avisthala, Vṛkasthala, Makandī,
Vārāṇāvata,

8 And a fifth. O mahā-muscled Keśava-Krishna,
This was how Duryodhana
and his followers were to be addressed
by the messenger.

9 Suyodhana-Duryodhana heard this proposal
of Śrīmān Yudhiṣṭhira, who wanted peace,
but he refused to honour it
Dāśārha-Krishna.

10 Why should you go there, Krishna,
when you know Suyodhana-Duryodhana
will agree to peace but refuse
to return our share of the kingdom?

11 O mahā-muscled one, the Pāṇḍavas,
helped by the Sṛñjayas
can surely deal with Duryodhana's
massive and restless army.

12 Madhusūdana-Krishna! Peace will not work,
and surrender is not the answer.
Under the circumstances,
you should not show any mercy.

13 Enemies who remain unmoved by gentleness
and reject compromise, Krishna,
should be firmly dealt with
by anyone who values dignity.

14 O mahā-muscled Acyuta-Krishna, punish them –
and do so severely.
The Pāṇḍavas and Sṛñjayas
will give you full co-operation.

15 Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons will readily help you.
You will gain glory.
and the Kṣatriya race
will have its happiness restored.

16 An avaricious Kṣatriya, or even a non-Kṣatriya,
Dāśārha-Krishna,
should be killed by a Kṣatriya
who respects *sva-dharma.*

17 Brahmins, however vicious, *tāta*, dear Krishna,
are the only exception.
A Brahmin is guru to all
and deserves special consideration.

18 The blame of killing a man
who does not deserve death
equals that of not killing the man who does.
Janārdana-Krishna,
all those who know dharma
have said as much.

19 Krishna! Take the help of the Pāṇḍavas,
Dāśārhas and Sṛñjayas,
and act so that this blame
does not stain you.

20 I have complete faith in you,
Janārdana-Krishna,
so I keep repeating – Keśava-Krishna,
what woman is like me?

21 I am daughter of rājā Drupada,
I was born on the *vedi*-altar
I am Dhṛṣṭadyumna's sister,
and your beloved *sakhī*, Krishna;

22 I am married into the Ajamīdhas,
I am mahātmā Pāṇḍu's daughter-in-law,
I am wife of his five Indra-like
Pāṇḍava sons.

23 I have borne five mahā-chariot-hero sons
to my husbands,
who by dharma are to you
exactly as Abhimanyu is, Krishna.

24 Notwithstanding all that, I was dragged
helpless by my hair into the sabhā
in my husbands' presence
and in your lifetime, Keśava-Krishna.

25 The Pāṇḍavas, the Pāñcālas, and Vṛṣṇis
were all living when I was dragged
into the sabhā by the vicious Kauravas
like a slave girl.

26 Pāṇḍu's sons looked on; they showed no anger,
they made no attempt to save me.
I thought of you, Govinda-Krishna:
*Save me! Save me!*

27 My father-in-law rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
said to me:
'Ask for a boon, Pāñcālī-Draupadī,
you deserve one.'

28 I said: "Free the Pāṇḍavas,
return their chariots and soldiers.'
They were released at my pleading
and sent to forest-exile.

29 Janārdana-Krishna, you know how I suffered!
O lotus-eyed one, Puṇḍarīkākṣa,
save me, and save my husbands,
and all our followers.

30 By dharma I am daughter-in-law of Bhīṣma
as well as Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
yet they treated me
like a slave girl.

31 *Dhik!* Arjuna, be ashamed of your bow-skill!
*Dhik*! Bhīma, be ashamed of your strength!
Be ashamed Duryodhana is still alive,
O Krishna.

32 If you care at all for me,
if you have pity for me,
then let loose your anger
on the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra."

33 Saying this, the lovely lady,
with her black glistering braided hair
curling at the ends
and soft and scented,

34 Graced with all the auspicious marks,
glossy like a large snake.
the lovely-hipped lady lifted her tresses
with her left hand,

35 Lotus-eyed, graceful-elephant-gaited
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, her eyes full of tears,
approached lotus-petal-eyed Krishna
and said:

36 "Puṇḍarīkākṣa-Krishna, when you go
to make peace with them,
remember Duḥśāsana laid hands
on these tresses.

37 Bhīma and Arjuna may stoop so low
as to make peace, Krishna,
but my old father and his mahā-chariot-hero sons
will fight,

38 And so will my five mahā-brave sons
under the leadership of Abhimanyu.
They will challenge
the Kauravas.

39 How can there be peace in my heart
until I see
the black hand of Duḥśāsana
severed and crushed?

40 Thirteen years have I waited,
thirteen years
feeding the fierce fire of revenge
in my heart.

41 O Bhīma, I am shocked!
My heart is torn apart
when I hear mahā-muscled Bhīma
preaching dharma!"

42 Her voice choked with feeling;
her eyes expanded;
she began sobbing loudly;
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī's body trembled.

43 The lovely-hipped lady wept copiously;
the warm tears
from her eyes trickled down
her large breasts.

44 Mahā-muscled Keśava-Krishna consoled her,
saying: "It will not be long
before you see other Bharata ladies
weeping profusely.

45 Lovely lady, they will weep like you;
their kinsmen and friends will be dead.
Consider those you disfavour
as already dead!

46 This I will achieve with help
from Bhīma, Arjuna,
and the twins, and Yudhiṣṭhira,
as ordained by fate.

47 The time has come. If Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
refuse my advice,
they will sleep on the earth,
food for dogs and jackals.

48 The Himavant hills may move,
the earth shatter
in a hundred pieces, heaven collapse;
my promise stands.

49 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, I speak the truth.
Do not cry any more.
You will see your enemies killed,
your husbands prosper."

## SECTION EIGHTY-THREE

1 "You are related to both parties,"
Arjuna said.
"Being friend of both, you are friend
of the Kuru race.

2 Keśava-Krishna, you are the ideal person
to achieve the good
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons and the Pāṇḍavas.
See that peace prevails.

3 Lotus-eyed one, without anger towards
Suyodhana-Duryodhana-
speak to our cousin-brothers
whatever words need to be spoken.

4 If his immature mind
rejects your dharma-and-artha
which is intended for their welfare,
he is doomed."

5 "I will go to rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,"
Śrī Bhagavān Krishna said,
"motivated by dharma,
and desiring the good of both."

[V:83:6-14]

Transcreated by P. Lal

6 Night passed, and a flawless sun rose
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the auspicious fellow-feeling hour
of Maitra-*muhūrta.*

7 In the month of Kaumuda,
during the influence
of the Revatī constellation
in the dewy post-autumn season
of an earth magnanimous with harvest,
the excellent one,

8 Krishna listened to the edifying
and pious chants of Brahmins,
like Vāsava-Indra attentive
to ṛṣis supplicating,

9 And passed through the ritual bath of purification;
then Janārdana-Krishna
put on sacred ornaments,
and honoured the sun and fire,

10 Touched the back of a bull,
paid respects to Brahmins,
half-circled the fire in *pradakṣiṇa,*
glanced at holy objects,

11 And, after determining the desires of Yudhiṣṭhira,
Janārdana-Krishna
said to Śini's grandson Sātyaki
who was sitting near him:

12 "Ready my chariot, my conch, *cakra*,
mace, arrows, and quivers,
together with weapons
of attack and defence,

13 Because Duryodhana is ill-ātmaned
and so are Karṇa and Subala's son Śakuni,
Strong men should not under-estimate
weak-seeming foes."

14 The attendants of conch-mace-and-*cakra*-wielding
Keśava-Krishna
busily began getting his chariot
equipped and ready.

15 It shone like the fire at the end of a yuga,
it was wind-swift,
it glittered with gems,
its wheels were the sun and the moon.

16 It was embossed with moons and half-moons,
fish, beasts, birds,
a variety of flowers,
and encrusted with jewels.

17 It pleased the eye,
it was radiant like the dawn,
it had gold-inlays
and resplendent flags and pennants.

18 Inside were tiger-skin carpets
and exquisite art objects;
it destroyed foes and increased the joy
of the Yādavas.

19 They bathed and caparisoned the horses
Śaibya, Sugrīva,
Meghapuṣpa and Balāhaka,
and yoked them to the chariot.

20 Adding to the glory of Krishna,
the symbol of the Indra-among-birds
Garuda perched on its flagstaff
and screamed.

21 Krishna ascended the will-propelled,
Meru-tall, cloud-roaring
*dundubhi*-kettle-drum-deafening chariot
readied for him.

22 Assisting Sātyaki inside the chariot,
Puruṣottama-Krishna drove away,
deafening earth and sky with the din
of chariot-wheels.

23 Instantly the clouds in the sky scattered,
auspicious winds began to blows,
dust vanished,
all was calm.

24 Auspicious birds and beasts followed
the chariot of Vāsudeva-Krishna
after respectfully doing *pradakṣiṇa*
around it.

25 Cranes, peacocks, and *haṁsas* followed
Madhusūdana-Krishna,
shrilling their cries for the auspicious completion
of the journey.

26 The sacred fire of the *homa*,
fed with auspicious mantras,
did *pradakṣiṇa*, and flamed bright
and smokeless.

27 Vāsiṣṭha, Vāmadeva, Bhūridyumna, Gaya, Kratha,
Śukra, Nārada, Vālmīki, Marutta, Kuśika, Bhṛgu,

28 And other mahā-fortune-favoured Brahmā-ṛṣis,
and gods did *pradakṣiṇa*
to Yādava-delighting Krishna,
the younger brother of Vāsava-Indra.

29 Offered pujā-respect in this manner
by the mahā-fortune-favoured mahā-ṛṣis,
Krishna proceeded
to the Kuru camp.

30 Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna,
and the twin sons of Mādrī
accompanied Krishna
part of the way.

31 Accomplished Cekitāna, the Cedi ruler Dhṛṣṭaketu,
Drupada, Kāśī, the mahā-chariot-hero Śikhaṇḍin,

32 Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Virāṭa and his sons, the Kekayas, –
All these bull-brave Kṣatriyas followed Krishna
on his mission.

33 And dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
followed Govinda-Krishna
for some distance,
along with the other rājās.

34 The person who never acted unjustly
out of kāma, fear, greed, or artha;
the selfless one
of stable mind,

35 The dharma-knower, the patient and wise,
Keśava-Krishna,
the dweller-in-all, Īśvara,
the eternal god of gods, Sanātana Deva-deva –

36 Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira embraced him
who had all the guṇas
and the auspicious Śrīvatsa-mark,
and gave this message:

37 "She who brought us up from infancy,
to whom fasts and tapasyā
are second nature,
who abides by holy rituals,

38 Who does pūjā before gods, guests, and gurus,
O Janārdana-Krishna,
who dearly loves her sons
and is loved by them,

39 Who saved us
from scheming Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
like a boat saving sailors
on a tempestuous sea,

40 Who has had to suffer so often
for our sake,
without expecting it –
O Mādhava-Krishna,

41 Give our mother our regards
and embrace her for us,
for she is filled with grief
for her Pāṇḍava sons.

42 From the day of her wedding, O foe-crusher,
without deserving it,
she has suffered in the house
of her fathers-in-law.

43 When will I ever get a chance,
O foe-crushing Krishna,
to offer solace
to my sorely troubled mother?

44 She affectionately trailed behind us, weeping,
when we left for forest-exile;
but we were forced
to leave her behind.

45 Grief does not always kill, fortunately;
if she still lives, Keśava-Krishna,
cared for by the Ānartas,
but grieving for her sons,

46 Krishna, give her my respectful regards.
Give my regards, O radiant one,
also to Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and the senior Kaurava rājās,

47 Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, mahārāja Bāhlīka,
Droṇa's son, Somadatta, and all the Bharatas;

48 And mahā-wise Vidura, adviser to the Kauravas,
Of brilliant learning – who deserves your embrace,
Madhusūdana-Krishna."

49 Yudhiṣṭhira said this to Krishna
in the presence of the rājās,
did *pradakṣiṇa,*
and returned.

50 Arjuna, also, as he went along,
said to the foe-crushing
bull-brave, invincible
Dāśārha hero:

51 "Krishna, radiant Govinda,
the rājās know
that we have insisted
on getting back half the kingdom.

52 If they, honouring you and not insulting us,
O mahā-muscled one,
agree to this, they will avert
a mahā-calamity.

53 But if Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son frustrates our proposal,
Janārdana-Krishna,
I will see to it that the Kṣatriyas
are exterminated."

54 These words of Arjuna greatly pleased
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma.
He seemed to be convulsed
with fierce anger;

55 Even as he trembled,
he roared with huge delight,
because the words of Dhanañjaya Arjuna
gave him intense pleasure.

56 The bowmen of the army heard his roars,
and trembled;
the animals in the army
passed urine and dung.

57 After repeating his promise
before Janārdana-Krishna,
Arjuna did *pradakṣiṇa* and,
with Keśava-Krishna's permission, left.

58 And the rājās left one by one,
and Janārdana Krishna,
pulled by Śaibya and Sugrīva,
happily resumed his journey.

59 Driven by Dāruka, the horses of Vāsudeva-Krishna
sped swiftly,
as if licking the road
and swallowing the sky.

60 Mahā-muscled Keśava-Krishna saw,
on both sides of the road,
Brahmā-ṛṣis; he stopped his chariot
and alighted.

61 Janārdana-Krishna gave them pūjā-respect,
addressing each with reverence,
and enquired if all was well
in the worlds,

62 If dharma flourished unharmed,
if the three castes
continued to honour Brahmins,
and if pūjā
was offered as usual to *pitṛs,*
gods and guests.

63 Even as he offered his own pūjā-respect,
Madhusūdana-Krishna enquired:
"Revered ones, what are your plans?
Where are you going?

64 Is there any way
that I can be of service to you?
Why have you decided, O revered ones,
to visit earth?"

65 The words of Keśava-Krishna
pleased the Brahmā-ṛṣis;
the strict-vowed ones, headed by Nārada,
who greeted him, were:

66 Adhaḥśirā, Sarpamālī, mahā-ṛṣi Devala,
Arvāvasu, Sujānu, Maitreya, Śunaka, Bali,

67 Dalbha's son Baka, Sthūlaśirāḥ, Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana,
Āyodadhaumya, Dhaumya, Aṇīmaṇḍavya, Kauśika,

68 Damoṣṇīṣa, Triṣavaṇ a, Parṇāda, Ghaṭajānuka,
Mauñjāyana, Vāyubhaksa, Pārāśarya, Sālika,

69 Śīlavān, Aśani, Dhātā, Śūnyapāla, Akrtavraṇa,
Śvetaketu, Kaloha, Paraśurāma of mahā tapasyā.

70 The son of Jamadagni, Paraśurāma,
friend of gods and anti-gods,
approached Madhusūdana-Krishna,
and embracing Govinda-Krishna, said:

71 "O Dāśārha-Krishna, the divine ṛṣis
and vastly-learned Brahmins, the rāja-ṛṣis,
and those who practise severe tapasyā,
are witnesses to the ancient feats
of gods and anti-gods,
O mahā-minded one.

72 They are eager to see
the Kṣatriya lords of the earth,
the rājās and their sabhās,
including yourself, O Janārdana-Krishna.

73 We are on our way to witness
this glorious spectacle,
and to hear the words spoken
on dharma-and-artha, O Mādhava-Krishna,

74 When you address the Kauravas
in the presence of the rājās.
O foe-crusher!
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, mahā-minded Vidura,

75 And you, O tiger of the Yādavas,
will assemble in the sabhā with others.
Your divine words, Mādhava-Krishna,
and theirs

76 Are what we look forward to hearing,
words of truth and goodwill.
Govinda-Krishna! That is why we are here.
We will meet again, O mahā-muscled one.

77 We will see you in the sabhā,
sitting on a celestial seat,
radiating energy
and prowess."

## SECTION EIGHTY-FOUR

1 Ten magnificent heavily armed mahā-muscled
mahā-chariot-heroes
(continued Vaiśampāyana) escorted Devakī's son
Krishna on his mission,

2 With a thousand soldiers and a thousand cavalry,
O foe-crushing Janamejaya.
Hundreds of others brought provisions
and other material.

3 Janamejaya asked:
"What were the omens observed
by mahātmā Madhusūdana-Krishna
in the course of his journey?"

4 Vaiśampāyana replied:
Let me list the omens,
some natural, others supernatural,
observed by mahātmā Krishna.

5 Lightnings suddenly flashed and roared
from cloudless skies;
rain poured down though no rain clouds
were visible.

6 The seven rivers, including the Sindhu,
that flow eastwards,
suddenly shifted direction.
The horizon points were blurred.

7 Fires flared up everywhere, O rājā,
the earth shuddered.
Wells and water-pots in hundreds
began overflowing.

8 A deep darkness fell on the world.
The basic points
and the subsidiary points were obscured
in thick dust, O rājā.

9 Weird screams were heard
though no one was present, O rājā.
These mysterious happenings occurred
in all countries.

10 A storm from the south-west
laid waste Hastināpura,
tearing down trees as thunder sounded
in the sky.

11 But everything was peaceful and smooth,
O Bharata descendant,
for Vārṣṇeya-Krishna as he went,
guided by auspicious winds.

12 Flowers showered down,
including large clusters of lotuses;
the road became smooth,
cleared of weeds and thorns.

13 Thousands of Brahmins eulogised
the giver of prosperity,
and offered him wealth,
and curds-ghee-and-honey-*madhupaska*.

14 Women appeared on the roads
and showered sweet-scented wildflowers
on Krishna,
the world-well-wishing mahātmā.

15 He arrived at charming Śālibhavana,
a spot of great beauty,
a place of dharma, rich in crops,
O bull-brave Bharata.

16 On the way he saw many animals,
and passed
through enchanting villages and cities
and other territories.

17 Friendly and open-minded,
protected by the Bharatas,
undisturbed by enemies,
untouched by natural disasters,

18 The citizens of Upaplavya emerged
from their houses
and flocked to the road
to catch a glimpse of Krishna.

19 They offered homage
to their adorable guest
who was visiting their country
like a magnificent travelling fire.

20 By the time foe-vanquishing Keśava-Krishna
reached Vṛkasthala village,
the sky had turned crimson
with the rays of the setting sun.

21 So he alighted from his chariot
and performed
the *saṁdhyā*-evening purifications
after ordering his horses unyoked.

22 Dāruka freed the horses
and attended to them
as laid down in the śāstras
after removing their harness.

23 When he finished, Madhusūdana Krishna said:
"We must spend the night here
in order to fulfil
Yudhiṣṭhira's mission."

24 Acting on his words,
his followers and attendants
prepared a lodging
and collected food and drink.

25 O king! The chief Brahmins of the village –
all high-born,
āryan-dignified and self-effacing-
as befitting Brahmin-behaviour –

26 Approached mahātmā foe-vanquishing
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna,
and offered him pūjā
with auspiciously worded blessings.

27 After pūjā-respecting Krishna
to whom all the worlds offer pūjā,
they offered their gem-filled homes
to mahātmā Dāśārha-Krishna.

28 *Prabhu* Krishna said, "You have done enough,"
and honoured them
by visiting their homes;
then he returned to his camp.

29 Keśava-Krishna fed them delicious food
and himself ate too in their company.
That night passed
in great happiness.

SECTION EIGHTY-FIVE

1 Messengers informed Dhṛtarāṣṭra
of the departure of Madhusūdana-Krishna
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and he said to mahā-armed Bhīṣma,

2 Droṇa, Sañjaya, mahā-minded Vidura,
and Duryodhana
and his followers –
his body horripilating as he spoke:

3 "O Kauravas,
I hear of a most marvellow event –
women, children, and old men
are spreading it everywhere –

4 Some talk about it well-meaningly;
some discuss it openly,
others in secret;
some in houses, some in streets.

5 They say illustrious Dāśārha-Krishna is coming here
as emissary of the Pāṇḍavas.
Madhusūdana-Krishna deserves our appreciation
and pūjā-respect.

6 The worlds depend on him –
Mādhava-Krishna is lord of creatures.
He combines patience, wisdom, bravery,
and dynamism,

7 He is Sanātana Dharma itself,
he should be respected.
Pūjā of him brings happiness,
and non-pūjā brings misery.

8 If that Dāśārha foe-vanquisher is pleased
with our welcome,
he will grant our wishes
in front of all these rājās.

9 O foe-crushers! Prepare for his welcome and pūjā.
Order the construction of pavilions
stocked with every amenity,
every luxury,

10 So that mahā-muscled Krishna
is completely satisfied.
Son of Gāndhārī, do this.
Bhīṣma, what do you think?"

11 Bhīṣma and the others pūjā-endorsed
the ruler-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra
saying:
"Indeed, this is an excellent plan."

12 Following the general opinion,
rājā Duryodhana ordered
the selection of sites
for the construction of pavilions.

13 The finest spots were chosen,
and numerous pavilions erected,
all of them studded
with precious stones.

14 Beautiful couches of exquisite craftsmanship,
girls, and scents,
and ornaments, superfine dresses
and other clothing,

15 The most delicious kinds of foods
and drinks,
garlands, and perfumes –
were all ordered by the rājā.

16 For Krishna's stay in the village of Vṛkasthala,
Duryodhana ordered
a special palace built,
studded with precious stones.

17 Having accomplished by human means
what was worthy of the gods,
rājā Duryodhana
informed Dhṛtarāṣṭra about it.

18 But Keśava-Krishna of the Dāśārhas arrived
at the Kaurava camp
without once glancing
at the gem-studded pavilions.

## SECTION EIGHTY-SIX

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Kṣattā-Vidura,
Janārdana-Krishna has left Upaplavya.
He is now in Vṛkasthala;
he will be here in the morning.

2 Janārdana-Krishna is chief of the Āhukas,
the finest of the Satvatas;
he is mahā-brave, mahā-energetic
and mahā-minded.

3 Mādhava-Krishna is the ruler and protector
of the flourishing Vṛṣṇis;
he is the great-Pitāmaha
of the three worlds.

4 The straight-thinking Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
respect his wisdom,
just as the Ādityas, Vasus, and Rudras
revere Bṛhaspati.

5 I will offer pūjā to mahātmā Krishna
in your presence, Vidura.
You who know dharma, let me explain
how I will do it.

6 I will gift him
sixteen golden furnished chariots,
each pulled by Bāhlīka horses
of identical hue.

7 O Kaurava! I will give eight foe-crushing,
rutting elephants,
with plough-like tusks,
each with eight attendants.

8 I will give him
a hundred lovely virginal slave-girls
with golden skins, and an equal number
of male servants.

9 I will give him
eighteen thousand woollen blankets
of the softest weave,
brought from our hill-regions.

10 I will give him thousands
of *ajina*-deer skins from Cīna;
Keśava-Krishna will be free to take
whatever he likes.

11 I will give him a brilliant gem
whose lustre glows
equally in day and night.
Keśava-Krishna deserves it.

12 I will give him a chariot
whose excellent horses
can cover fourteen *yojanas*
in the course of a single day.

13 I will give him eight times
the amount of food
that his followers and war-animals
can consume.

14 Excepting Duryodhana, all my sons
and grandsons,
ornamented and charioted, will personally
welcome Dāśārha-Krishna.

15 Thousands of royal courtesans
wearing ornaments
will go out on foot to welcome
mahā-fortune-favoured Keśava-Krishna.

16 Beautiful unmarried girls,
proceeding from my capital
to welcome Janārdana-Krishna,
will all go without veils.

17 Let all my subjects –
men, women, and children –
go and see mahātmā Madhusūdana-Krishna
radiant like the sun.

18 Let the sky be filled
with fluttering mahā-flags and pennants,
and roads sprinkled with water
to settle the dust.

19 The house of Duḥśāsana is more luxurious
than that of Duryodhana,
Clean it thoroughly
and decorate it.

20 It has eye-captivating rooms;
it is comfortably furnished,
relaxing, and mahā-sumptuous
in all the seasons.

21 My wealth, and Duryodhana's gems,
are concentrated in that house
Let Vārṣṇeya-Krishna receive
all that he deserves."

### SECTION EIGHTY-SEVEN

1 Vidura said, "O rājā,
the three worlds consider you
as the finest of men.
You are loved and revered, O Bharata.

2 Your age has brought you calm of mind.
Your words, in your last years,
cannot violate the śāstras
or commonsense.

3 O rājā! Your subjects believe
that dharma resides within you
as lines in the moon, rays in the sun,
waves in the sea.

4 Lord of the earth, your good qualities
sustain the world.
You and your friends should cherish
these good guṇas.

5 Be straightforward, O rājā.
Don't let your childishness
ruin your sons and grandsons,
your loved and closest friends.

6 Your gifts to Krishna are considerable, O rājā.
Indeed, Dāśārha-Krishna deserves all these,
and more –
he deserves the whole earth.

7 But the truth is that you are not giving
out of dharma
or from desire to please him;
you want your own gain.

8 That is māyā-trickery. I speak the truth.
O lavish *dakṣiṇā*-giving rājā!
I can tell your hidden motives
from your acts.

9 King! The five Pāṇḍavas are interested
only in five villages.
If you refuse them these,
they will reject peace.

10 You want to use wealth
to influence Vāṛṣṇeya-Krishna;
your aim is to create a rift
between him and the Pāṇḍavas.

11 But let me tell you the truth –
you can never estrange him
from Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
by bribery and mischief-mongering.

12 Krishna is a mahātmā,
a man of unshakable bhakti,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna is to him
like the breath of life itself.

13 Janārdana-Krishna will not look
for anything other than water to drink,
water to wash his feet,
and formal good wishes.

14 But give him all the loving hospitality
that a mahātmā deserves.
Who could be worthier than Janārdana-Krishna
to show honour to?

15 Keśava-Krishna is arriving here
to work for the Kaurava good.
Do whatever is conducive
to the success of his mission, O rājā.

16 Dāśārha-Krishna wants peace for you, Duryodhana
and the Pāṇḍavas.
O Indra-among-rājās,
it would be wise to do as he says,

17 You are the father, they are the sons.
You are old, O rājā, they are young.
Act as a father
towards his children."

## SECTION EIGHTY-EIGHT

1 Duryodhana said:
"What Vidura says about Krishna is true.
Janārdana-Krishna has a fanatic regard
for the Pāṇḍavas,

2 Which is why, O Indra-among-rājās,
there is no point
in showering all manner of wealth
upon Janārdana-Krishna.

3 Keśava-Krishna may deserve it,
but this is not the time and place. O rājā.
Adhokṣaja-Krishna might get the impression
we honour him out of fear.

4 O lord of the world, it is my opinion
that anything
that lowers Kṣatriya dignity
should be avoided.

5 Large-eyed Krishna certainly deserves
the pūjā-respect of the worlds,
let alone this world.
I know this.

6 But in the present situation, *prabhu*-lord,
nothing should be offered to him.
Hospitality cannot put off
an already-decided upon war."

7 Bhīṣma, grandfather of the Kauravas,
heard these words
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and said to Vicitravīrya's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

8 "Well-received or otherwise,
Janārdana-Krishna will not be affected.
He cannot be demeaned,
Keśava-Krishna is beyond all insult.

9 O mahā-muscled one, whatever Krishna
has decided as final,
he will do.
No one can stop him.

10 What mahā-armed Krishna advises,
should be followed.
Through him let us speedily make peace
with the Pāṇḍavas.

11 Janārdana-Krishna is a dharmātmā;
he will speak in favour
of dharma-and-artha.
You and your friends should listen."

12 Duryodhana said:
"It seems, O rājā, Pitāmaha,
I will never be sole emperor,
as long as the Pāṇḍavas are living.

13 So I have devised a mahā-plan.
My mind is made up.
I will imprison Janārdana-Krishna,
who is the Pāṇḍavas' refuge.

14 With Krishna captive,
the Vṛṣṇis and Pāṇḍavas
will be powerless.
Krishna will be here tomorrow morning.

15 Tell me how I can implement my plan
without rousing
Janārdana-Krishna's suspicions
and without endangering ourselves."

16 These terrible words about imprisoning Krishna
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
plunged Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his ministers
in perplexed sorrow.

17 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said to his son Duryodhana:
"Protector of people,
do not say this.
You know this violates eternal dharma.

18 Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna is an emissary.
He is a dear relative.
He has done us no wrong.
How can we Kauravas imprison him?"

19 Bhīṣma said: "Your wicked-minded son
is inviting doom, Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
He rejects well-wishers, spurns commonsense,
and plans mischief.

20 You do not listen to well-wishers either,
but follow him
whose company is pernicious
and intentions equally so.

21 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's utterly ill-behaved son
and his ministers will be reduced to nothing
when confronted
with wonder-working Krishna.

22 I will not listen any more
to this perverted man
who has abandoned dharma
and decided to be cruel."

23 Burning with indignation,
the finest-of-the-Bharatas,
elderly Bhīṣma of truly incredible prowess,
rose and walked away.

SECTION EIGHTY-NINE

1 Krishna woke in the morning,
did his ablutions
and, with the Brahmins' permission,
resumed his journey.

2 The inhabitants of Vṛkasthala
took leave of mahā-muscled
and mahā-powerful. Krishna,
and returned home.

3 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons, with the exception of Duryodhana,
and Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa and others,
splendidly dressed,
hurried to greet Krishna.

4 O raja! Crowds of towns people turned up,
some on foot,
others in convenient vehicles,
to catch a glimpse of Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna.

5 Krishna greeted wonder-working Bhīṣma
and Droṇa,
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,
and entered the city with them.

6 The felicitate the arrival of Krishna,
the city's main roads
were decorated with scintillating gems
and precious stones.

7 No one seemed to be indoors.
Man, woman and child, O bull-brave Bharata,
without exception, were in the streets
to catch a glimpse of Krishna.

8 Mahārāja, when Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna
entered the capital,
the people on the main road stood still
and sang his praises.

9 The large, elegant terraces
from where noble ladies watched,
seemed about to topple over
with the excess weight.

10 The normally swift-coursing horses
of Vāsudeva-Krishna's chariot
had to slow down to pass through
the teeming crowds.

11 The lotus-eyed foe-vanquishing hero
entered the ivory-white
palace-studded complex
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

12 He passed through three sections
of the royal mansion,
and stood before Vicitravīrya's son
Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

13 As soon as Dāśārha-Krishna entered,
mahā-illustrious, wisdom-inseeing Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and Bhīṣma and Droṇa
stood up.

14 Kṛpa, Somadatta and mahārāja Bāhlīka
also rose from their couches
to offer pūjā-respect
to Janārdana-Krishna.

15 Vārṣṇeya-Krishna in return, without delay,
approached
renowned rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Bhīṣma
and offered his pūjā-respect.

16 Mādhava-Madhusūdana-Krishna
honoured the rājās,
as required by traditional dharma,
according to seniority.

17 Then Janardana-Krishna addressed himself
to illustrious Droṇa
and his son Aśvatthāman,
and Kṛpa and Somadatta.

18 Acyuta-Krishna sat down,
at a sign from Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
on an exquisite, jewel-ornamented,
golden mahā-couch.

19 In the traditional style, the kings,
headed by Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
sat on an exquisite, jewel-ornamented,
golden mahā-couch.

20 Govinda-Krishna accepted the gift-offerings.
and lingered there,
joking with the Kauravas
after being introduced to them.

21 Then the mahā-illustrious foe-vanquisher,
receiving Dhṛtarāṣṭra's pūjā,
with the rājā's permission,
left the palace.

22 Mādhava-Krishna exchanged greetings and pleasantries
with the Kauravas,
after which he proceeded
to Vidura's enchanting house.

23 Vidura emerged from his abode
and honoured Janardana-Krishna
of the Dāśārhas with auspicious
and desirable gifts.

24 "How can I describe," said Vidura,
"the joy I feel at your darshan,
O lotus-eyed one,
O innermost lotus of the heart?"

25 All-dharma-knowing Vidura offered Govinda-Krishna
guest-hospitality,
and enquired from Madhusūdana Krishna
about the Pāṇḍavas' health.

26 Vidura was the learned and sincere
and dear friend of the Pāṇḍavas,
a wise unmalicious man
of dharma-and-artha.

27 Knowing this, Krishna of the Dāśārhas,
who could see everything clearly,
revealed to him
all the plans of the Pāṇḍavas.

## SECTION NINETY

1 After visiting Vidura (Vaiśampāyana continued)
  foe-crushing Janārdana-Krishna
went in the afternoon to Kunti,
  his father's sister.

2 She saw him coming like a radiant sun;
  Pṛthā-Kuntī ran out and embraced him;
she remembered her sons,
  and wept profusely.

3 Her tears kept flowing, for she had seen
  Govinda-Krishna of the Vṛṣṇis,
a friend of her sons,
  after a long time.

4 After she had performed the rites of hospitality,
  and lord-of-warriors Krishna was seated,
she said,
  pale and sobbing:

5 "Those who from childhood
  honoured their gurus,
who are humble, like-minded,
  the well-wishers,
were tricked out of their kingdom
  and sent into exile.

6 Those who had disciplined their rapture
  and their anguish,
the truth-speaking Brahmin-devotees,
  leaving me crying,

7 Went to the forest. It broke my heart.
  O Keśava-Krishna!
The mahātmā Pāṇḍavas did not deserve to suffer.
  How could they

8 Survive in the lion-tiger-and-elephant-
  infested forest?
They lost their father early in youth.
  I brought them up.

9 He could they survive in the forest
without me?
The sound of drums and conches,
the flute's piping, O Keśava-Krishna,

10 Would wake them from sleep
ever since they were children.
The trumpeting of elephants
and the whinnying of horses

11 And the rattle of chariot-wheels
woke them in the palace,
together with the music of conches, *bheri*-drums,
flutes and vīṇās.

12 The twice-born spoke their praises
at dawn in songs:
and they pūjā-respected the twice-born
with gifts of robes and precious stones.

13 They were worthy of respect,
and were respected by mahātmā Brahmins
who sang hymns
and benedictory chants.

14 How could they, who slept
on soft *raṅku*-deer-skin in the palace,
endure to be woken
by roaring beasts?

15 I cannot imagine they ever slept,
O Janārdana-Krishna
because the music of cymbals, drums,
conches and flutes

16 And the songs of girls used to wake them,
O Madhusudana-Krishna,
while professional bards and reciters
chanted their praises.

17 How could they endure to be woken
by roaring beasts in the mahā-forest?
The one with humility, truth, patience,
discipline, compassion,

18 The controller of kāma and hate,
who followed in the path
of Ambarīṣa, Māndhātā, Yayāti,
and Nahuṣa,

19 Bharata, Dilīpa, Śibi, son of Uśīnara,
and other rāja-ṛṣis,
he who could take on the task
of such dedication,

20 He who knew dharma, was straightforward,
devoted to truth,
the rājā whose guṇas made him rule
the three worlds –

21 The dharmātmā, foe-less Yudhiṣṭhira,
the Kuru chief with complexion
the colour of Jāmbu-river gold,
the lord of dharma-knowers,
the handsome, long-armed one –
how is he, Krishna?

22 Who is ten-thousand-elephant-strong,
wind-swift, mahā-powerful,
righteously wrathful,
dedicated to his dear brothers,

23 Who killed Kīcaka and Kīcaka's relatives,
Madhusūdana-Krishna;
the hero who killed Hiḍimba, Baka,
and the Krodhavaśas,

24 Whose strength equals Śakra-Indra's,
whose prowess equals the wind-god's,
whose anger equals Maheśvara-Śiva's
foe-crushing Bhīma,

25 The quickly-roused son of Pāṇḍu,
who has restrained
his strength and ātman
under the influence of Yudhiṣṭhira,

26 The radiant, superhuman mahātmā
of incredible fame,
fierce-named Bhīma of fierce looks, –
O Janārdana-Krishna,

27 Tell me how is the wolf-waisted one,
Vṛkodara-Bhīma, whose arms are like maces,
how is the second son of Pāṇḍu,
O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna?

28 And ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
who considers himself greater
than his ancient thousand-armed namesake,
O Keśava-Krishna,

29 Who can with one arm shoot
five hundred arrows,
the son of Pāṇḍu who equals
rājā Kārtavīrya-Arjuna,

30 Whose energy equals the sun's,
whose self-descipline equals a mahā-ṛṣis',
whose patience equals the earth's,
and prowess Mahendra-Indra's,

31 By whose strength the Kaurava rājās succeeded,
Madhusūdana-Krishna,
in annexing the territories that comprise
their large kingdom,

32 Whose muscular vitality is respected
by the Pāṇḍavas –
that son of Pāṇḍu, mighty feat-accomplishing
chariot warrior,

33 Challenging whom no one survives –
the same, Aryuta-Krishna,
who defeats others and is himself undefeated,
known as Jiṣṇu,

34 Who is the refuge of the Pāṇḍavas,
like Vāsava-Indra of the gods –
your cousin and *sakhā*-friend Dhanañjaya-Arjuna –
how is he?

35 Who is gentle to all, who is modest,
who knows the use of mahā-weapons,
who has kindness and dharma,
whom I dearly love,

36 The great archer Sahadeva,
the ornament of conferences,
learned in dharma-and-artha,
dutiful to his brothers, Krishna,

37 Who always leads a blameless life,
who is honoured, Madhusūdana-Krishna,
by his mahātmā brothers
because of his goodness –

38 Tell me, O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna,
about the son of Mādrī,
excellent warrior who was always
ready to help me.

39 The handsome-looking and heroic
son of Pāṇḍu
who is the very life
of all his brothers,

40 The mahā-powerful one, my son,
the versatile warrior,
the mahā-archer Nakula –
is he well, Krishna?

41 O mahā-muscled Krishna!
Will I get to see
the accomplished luxury-accustomed
mahā-chariot-hero again?

42 Here, I am, breathing and alive,
to whom even the slightest separation
from Nakula meant intolerable agony,
O heroic Krishna!

43 I love Draupadī even more than
I do my sons, Janārdana-Krishna.
She is high-born and beautiful,
she has all the virtues.

44 Truth-speaking Draupadī
preferred her husbands to her sons;
the left her sons behind,
and went with the Pāṇḍavas

45 O Acyuta-Krishna, how is the all-auspicious
*iśvarī* Draupadī, noble-born lady,
who once enjoyed the fulfilment
of all her wishes?

46 How Draupadī has suffered,
though she has five brave husbands,
all flaming, foe-crushing,
heroic bowmen!

47 I have not seen truth-speaking Draupadī,
O foe-destroying Krishna,
for fourteen years,
nor has she seen her sons.

48 Good karma is not sufficient
to bring happiness,
for good Draupadi has received nothing
but unhappiness.

49 When I recall how Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
was dragged into the sabhā,
I stop admiring Yudhiṣṭhira, Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
Bhīma, and the twins.

50 Nothing shocked me more than to see
Draupadī dragged,
in her period, in the presence
of her fathers-in-law.

51 Anger and greed made the scoundrel
drag her inside the sabhā
in her single dress
before all the Kauravas.

52 Sitting there and silently watching
were Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
mahārāja Bāhlīka, Kṛpa, Somadatta,
and the Kauravas.

53 The only man I pūjā-respect is Kṣattā-Vidura.
It is not wealth or knowledge
that earns a man respect,
but character.

54 The character of mahā-profound
mahātmā Vidura
shines like the world's finest ornament,
O Krishna."

55 Though happy to see Govinda-Krishna,
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
Kunta poured out her innumerable griefs
in his ears:

56 "O foe-chastiser, how could gambling
and deer-hunting,
ancient sports of licentious rājās,
ever please the Pāṇḍavas?

57 Death itself cannot shock me more
than the despicable dragging
of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī in the sabhā
of the Kauravas.

58 O foe-chastiser, I have endured
the exile of my sons
and their wanderings, and many other-sorrows,
Janārdana-Krishna.

59 O Mādhava Krishna, chastiser of foes!
What could hurt me and my sons more
than their suffering
in the forest?

60 Fourteen years have passed
since Duryodhana exiled them.
If suffering is expiation of misdeed,
happiness should now be ours.

61 I never treated Dhṛtarāṣtra's sons
as different from Pāṇḍu's.
That alone, Krishna, should suffice
to persuade you and the Pāṇḍavas
to kill your foes
and recover the kingdom.

62 The Pāṇḍavas have qualities
that make them invincible.
The blame is not mine, or Suyodhana-Duryodhana's,
but my father's,

63 Who gave me away to Kuntibhoja
like money
squandered by a rich man.
When I was still a little girl
playing with a ball,
your grandfather

64 Gave me away to his close friend,
mahātmā Kuntibhoja.
O foe-chastiser, I was abandoned by father
and father-in-law!
The way I have suffered,
better I had died, O Krishna!

65 When Savyasācī-Arjuna was born,
a voice in the delivery-room predicted:
'Your son will be
a famed world-conqueror.

66 He will kill the Kauravas in a mahā-war.
Kuntī's son
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna and his brothers will perform
three great ritual-sacrifices.'

67 I do not question that prediction.
I bow to dharma,
and to mighty Krishna.
Dharma sustains all of creation.

68 If there is any such thing as dharma,
then, O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna,
you will surely accomplish
what that voice predicted.

69 Neither widowhood, nor loss of possessions,
nor this family quarrel has hurt me so much
as separation from my sons,
O Mādhava-Krishna.

70 How can I ever have peace
in my heart
without seeing the Gāṇḍīva-wielding
master of weapons, Arjuna?

71 For fourteen years I have not seen Yudhiṣṭhira,
O Govinda-Krishna,
nor Vṛkodara-Bhīma, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva.

72 *Śrāddha*-ceremonies for the dead, Janārdana-
Krishna, are performed for those long-missing
and presumed dead. What other than dead
are they to me, all my sons?

73 O Mādhava-Krishna, tell this to the dharmātmā
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, for me:
'Your dharma is declining, my son.
Don't be a hypocrite.'

74 Shame on me, Vāsudeva-Krishna!
I have to depend on others!
Death is to be preferred
to such beggar-like humiliation.

75 Tell Dhanañjaya Arjuna and Vṛkodara-Bhīma:
'The time has now come
for which a Kṣatriya mother
gave both of you birth.

76 If you now let it pass
without doing anything,
you, who are world-famed,
will reveal your callousness.

77 If you prove cruelly insensitive now,
I will disown you for ever.
There are times that call
for sacrifice of life itself.'

78 Tell Mādrī's sons, who are proficient
in Kṣatriya-dharma:
'Enjoy life's luxuries, my sons,
after first risking your life,

79 Because such luxuries are meant only
for those who adhere
to Kṣatriya-dharma.'
Inspire them, O Puruṣottama-Krishna!

80 And tell mahā-muscled Arjuna,
the greatest of wielders of weapons,
the heroic son of Pāṇḍu:
'Follow Draupadī's advice.'

81 You know that Bhīma and Arjuna,
when enraged,
are like Antaka-Death,
and can topple even the gods.

82 They were insulted when Duḥśāsana and Karṇa
dragged Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
into the sabhā
and foully insulted her.

83 Duryodhana abused Bhīma
in the presence
of all the assembled Kauravas.
He will have to reap the fruits.

84 Wolf-waisted Bhīma, once abused,
never forgets.
His wrath takes a long time
to simmer down,
and dies only when his foes
have been killed.

85 It is not the kingdom's loss
that grieves me;
not the defeat at dice;
not even the exile of my sons –

86 What hurts is the way dark-skinned Draupadī,
dressed in a single cloth,
was dragged into the sabhā
and filthily demeaned.

87 Her husbands were alive, but none to protect
lovely-thighed Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī in her period
who always abided by the dictates
of Kṣatriya-dharma!

88 I had you, Madhusūdana-Krishna and my sons,
and finest of powerful men Balarāma
and the mahā-chariot-hero Pradyamna
to protect me;

89 And invincible Bhīma and never-retreating-
from-battle Vijaya-Arjuna –
and yet, O Puruṣottama-Krishna, think –
what I had to suffer!"

90 Śauri-Krishna, *sakhā* friend of Partha Arjuna,
comforted his aunt Kuntī,
who was plunged in griel for her sons
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

91 Vāsudeva-Krishna said: "No woman in the world
is like you. You are my father's sister.
You are rājā Śūra's daughter,
and by marriage you are an Ajamīḍha.

92 You are mahā-noble-born,
transplanted from one lake to another.
You are the all-auspicious queen,
pūjā-respected by your husband.

93 The wife of a hero, you produced heroes.
You have all the virtues.
You are wise, you have bravely
faced joy and pain.

94 The Pāṇḍavas overcame sleep and sloth,
anger and joy,
hunger and thirst, and tasted the happiness
enjoyed by heroes.

95 Because they prefer heroic happiness,
they spurn trivial pleasures:
their mahā-energy and prowess
reject pettiness.

96 The wise have patience that adjusts
to pain and pleasure;
whereas the small-minded are passively dull
in both cases.

97 The wise, therefore, welcome extremes
of hardship and joy;
they shun indifference,
they consider that a form of suffering.

98 Pāṇḍu's sons and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī send you
their respectful greetings;
they are well, and they enquire
after your welfare.

99 You will soon see them successful
in their goals;
they will be the prosperous lords of the worlds,
their enemies all wiped out."

100 Kuntī, anxious about her sons, was comforted
by Janārdana-Krishna's words.
Overcoming her confusion, but still grieving,
she said:

101 "O mahā-muscled Madhusūdana-Krishna!
What in your opinion is right
and deserves to be done,
should be done.

102 O foe-punisher, let it be done with dharma,
without deceit.
I know the power of your truth
and your unique birth.

103 I know you employ wisdom and skill
in matters concerning your friends.
You are dharma, you are truth,
you are mahā-tapasyā.

104 You are the saviour, you are mahā-Brahmā.
Whatever there is, is stable in you.
What you say, happens;
you are truth itself.

105 O unvanquished chief of the Vṛṣṇis!
You are the goal
of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas
and of the world, O Mādhava-Krishna.
Your glory and your wisdom sustain all creation,
O Keśava-Krishna."

106 Mahā-muscled Govinda-Krishna
circumambulated Kuntī in *pradakṣiṇa*,
and went to the house
of Duryodhana.

SECTION NINETY-ONE

1 Having done *pradakṣiṇa* and taken leave
of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
foe-crushing Śauri-Govinda-Krishna
proceeded to the house of Duryodhana.

2 Janārdana-Krishna entered a lavish palace
equalling that
of Puraṁdara-Indra himself,
with luxurious seats everywhere.

3 He entered, unchallenged by the door-guardians;
radiant Krishna
crossed the three halls,
and saw the cloud-like peak

4 Of the palace, blazing with mahā-radiance
and affluence.
There, surrounded by thousands of rājās
and Kauravas,

5 Mahā-muscled Duryodhana lounged on a couch.
He saw also Duḥśāsana,
and Karṇa, and the son of Subala
named Śakuni.

6 They relaxed beside Duryodhana.
When the Dāśārha chief Krishna entered,
the mahā-renowned son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra

7 Stood up with his advisers
and pūjā-respected Madhusūdana-Krishna.
Keśava-Krishna returned the greetings of Duryodhana
and his ministers,

8 And offered appropriate respects
to the assembled rājās.
Then, Vārṣṇeya-Krishna sat down
on an enchanting, gold-worked seat,

9 Ornamented with precious stones
and carpet-covered.
Duryodhana offered undeviating Janārdana-Krishna
honey-and-curd *madhuparka*,

10 And the use of his mansions
and all his kingdom's facilities.
Then, turning to Govinda-Krishna,
who sat like a bright sun,

11 All the Kaurava rājās and others
paid suitable homage.
Then Vārṣṇeya-Krishna, by the ever-victorious
rājā Duryodhana,

12 Was invited to dinner.
Keśava Krishna declined the invitation.
Duryodhana said to Krishna,
in the assembly of Kauravas,

13 In a sweet voice that concealed his deceit,
glancing at Karṇa:
"What is the reason our food,
drink, dresses, beds,

14 Which we have graciously offered,
are refused by you?
You wish both sides well, Janārdana-Krishna,
you should be impartial.

15 Mādhava! Are you not a close friend
of my father Dhṛtarāṣṭra?
You, Govinda, know the truths
of dharma-and-artha.
O wielder-of-the-mace-and-*cakra*,
explain this to me."

16 Mahā-minded Govinda-Krishna
raised his mighty arm, and,
in a voice that boomed like thunder,
replied promptly to Duryodhana.

17 In speech rightly-worded, distinct, lucid,
properly pronounced,
the lotus-eyed one gave his reply
to rājā Duryodhana:

18 "Only messengers who have completed
successful negotiations accept pūjā-respect.
Let us agree first; then, O Bharata,
entertain me and my followers."

19 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son said to Janārdana-Krishna:
"I find it unseemly
that a man of your dignity
should adopt this attitude.

20 What does it matter if negotiations
are successful or not?
We offered you our hospitality,
Madhusūdana-Krishna.

21 I cannot accept your explanation,
Madhusūdana-Krishna.
I cannot understand you refusing our loving pūjā-respect,
Puruṣottama-Krishna.

22 Govinda-Krishna, we have no quarrel
or enmity with you.
The more I think, the more I find your refusal
undignified."

23 Janārdana-Krishna stared at Duryodhana
and his ministers – and laughed.
Then the Dāśārha chief
said to the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

24 "Neither kāma, nor anger, nor hate,
nor the success of my mission,
nor argument, nor greed
makes me forget dharma.

25 One eats at others' for love,
or in abject need;
you do not love me, rājā,
my need is not abject.

26 You have pointlessly hated the Pāṇḍavas
since their birth, O rājā,
though they are affectionate cousin-brothers
full of guṇa-virtues.

27 Your unreasonable hatred of the Pāṇḍavas
is most unseemly.
They are firm in dharma –
who dares to blame them?

28 The man who hates them, hates me;
the man who respects them, respects me.
I and the dharma-cherishing Pāṇḍavas
are one.

29 He is considered vicious who,
out of kāma or anger,
gets bewildered and harbours hatred
against the virtuous.

30 The man who looks at his relatives
with eyes of greed and delusion
becomes his own victim;
he never prospers for long.

31 The man who perseveringly pleases
those who have noble qualities,
though they are strangers,
soon gains fame.

32 The food of a man who harbours hate
should not be eaten.
Such a man should not be fed either.
Rājā! You hate the Pāṇḍavas.

33 The food you offer me is defiled,
unfit for eating.
Only the food that Kṣattā-Vidura offers
will please me."

34 Mahā-muscled Krishna said this
to agitated Duryodhana,
and walked out of the white palace
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son.

35 Mahā-muscled, mahā-minded Vāsudeva-Krishna
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
went straight to the residence
of mahātmā Vidura.

36 While the mahā-muscled one
was staying with Vidura,
the Kauravas – Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, and Bāhlīka
visited him.

37 They said to Mādhava-Krishna, valiant Madhusūdana,
"O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna!
Our gem-ornamented palaces are placed
at your disposal."

38 The mahā-energetic slayer of Madhu
said to those Kauravas:
"You may leave now.
Your offer has honoured me."

39 The Kauravas left; and Kṣattā-Vidura
paid his respects
to the never-defeated Dāśārha chief
by satisfying all his wants.

40 He brought large helpings
of pure and delicious food and drink
in order to please
mahātmā Keśava-Krishna.

41 Madhusūdana-Krishna gratified
the Veda-knowing Brahmins first
by offering them the food and wealth
he had received.

42 Like Vāsava-Indra sitting surrounded by Maruts,
Krishna, surrounded by his followers,
enjoyed the delicious meal
provided by Vidura.

## SECTION NINETY-TWO

1 Krishna dined, and was resting
when Vidura said to him, that night,
"Keśava-Krishna, you were indiscreet
to come here.

2 Duryodhana's a fool who repudiates
dharma-and-artha;
seeking honour himself,
he violates the honour of others:
his passion even his elders cannot control,
Janārdana-Krishna.

3 Ill-ātmaned Duryodhana violates the dharma-śāstras,
Janārdana-Krishna.
He thinks only of himself;
impossible for him to do good.

4 He is a kāma-ātmā; self-appointedly wise,
suspicious,
harmer of his friends, slothful, ungrateful,
dharma-breaker, lover-of-lies.

5 He is a fool of undeveloped intelligence,
the victim of his senses,
indulger in kāma,
never doing what deserves doing.

6 These and other defects possess him.
His pride is such
that he will reject your advice
though meant for his good.

7 He has too much faith in Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Kṛpa, Karṇa,
and Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
which is why he does not think of peace.

8 Duryodhana and Karṇa are convinced the Pāṇḍavas,
O Janārdana-Krishna,
will not dare face an army
led by Bhīṣma and Droṇa.

9 Duryodhana has childish ambitions.
Madhusūdana-Krishna,
he has gathered a large army
and thinks he can get what he wants.

10 Wicked-minded Duryodhana is convinced
that Karṇa singly
can lead him to victory –
which is why he rejects peace.

11 You, Keśava-Krishna, are motivated
by fraternal feeling
and you want peace for the good
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

12 But they have already decided
that they will not part
with what the Pāṇḍavas justly deserve.
Advice is futile.

13 Where good or bad advice finds identical response,
a wise man, Madhusūdana-Krishna,
is like a singer among deaf people;
he should remain silent.

14 Mādhava-Krishna! The twice-born do not try
to convince lowborn *cāṇḍālas.*
None should speak to the ignorant
and disrespectful.

15 He will behave like a thoughtless boy –
this fool will refuse
to follow your words –
your words to him are futile.

16 I do not like the idea, Krishna,
of your going
to those wicked-thinking persons
in conference.

17 I do not like the idea, Krishna,
that you should try
to persuade so many ill-minded,
wicked-intentioned people.

18 They will never accept what is good
because they have never honoured age,
because pride and folly
obsess them.

19 He has under him a strong army.
He suspects you, Mādhava-Krishna,
and will not listen to anything
you have to say.

20 Janārdana-Krishna! The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
are convinced they are invincible,
that even Indra and the gods
cannot defeat them.

21 People with such notions,
especially when stirred by kāma and anger,
can never be reached
by your noble words.

22 In the midst of his army
of horses and chariots
and elephants, Duryodhana
is convinced he has conquered
the earth, and has crossed
the reach of fear.

23 Duryodhana aspires
to a limitless and
unrivalled empire.
His only desire
is surplus of wealth,
he does not want peace.

24 From all indications,
the end of the world
is at hand – Duryodhana's
the reason the Pāṇḍavas
and rājās have gathered
for this terrible war.

25 And since you dispossessed
these rajas, O Krishna,
they now are your foes.
They have out of fear
become allies of Karṇa
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

26 These soldiers are ready
to sacrifice themselves
for the cause of Duryodhana,
and wipe out the Pāṇḍavas.
Unwise, O brave Dāśārha,
to be among them.

27 How can you even think, O enemy-crusher,
of standing in the middle
of so many wicked-minded
and determined enemies?

28 O mahā-muscled slayer of enemies!
Even the gods fear you.
I know how wise and manly and great
you are.

29 My words to you, Mādhava-Krishna,
come from love, esteem, and friendship;
I feel for you even more
than for the Pāṇḍavas.

30 How can I describe my delight at your darshan,
O lotus-eyed one?
You are the innermost ātman
in everybody."

## SECTION NINETY-THREE

1 These loving and gentle words of Vidura
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
made Bhagavān Puruṣottama-Mdhusūdana-Krishna
reply to him:

2 "Your words are the words
of a man of mahā-wisdom.
You have spoken honestly,
as friend to friend.

3 Your words reveal the dharma-and-artha
expected of you.
You have spoken to me
like a father or a mother.

4 What you say is true and deserves
careful consideration:
but let me explain to you, Vidura,
why I have come here.

5 I am aware of the hostility
of the Kauravas
and the ill-ātmaned sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra –
yet here I am, Kśattā-Vidura.

6 This earth is waiting for the destruction
of horses, chariots, and elephants.
The man who will free her
from the noose of this doom
will have performed
the highest dharma.

7 Even if a man fail in the completion
of a deed of dharma,
his effort alone is meritorious.
There is no doubt of this.

8 And if a man plans but fails to implement
a vicious act,
the fruits are still his to suffer.
Dharma-knowers say so.

9 That is why I make honest attempts
to negotiate peace
among the Kauravas and Sṛñjayas.
The alternative is doom.

10 This great calamity facing the Kauravas
is the handiwork
of Karṇa and Duryodhana.
The others are mere followers.

11 The wise say that a man is heartless
for not trying,
to the best of his powers,
to save a friend from ruin.

12 You should seize a friend by his hair
and dissuade him
from wrong-doing.
The more you try, the less the blame.

13 Vidura! It is right that I should
advise Duryodhana
and his ministers with words
that lead to dharma-and-artha.

14 Without resorting to maya-trickery,
I will continue to work
for the welfare of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
the Pāṇḍavas, and all Kṣatriyas.

15 Even if Duryodhana suspects me,
I will have done my duty
and satisfied myself,
working for his good.

16 Wise men say that a friend
who does not mediate
when relatives quarrel
cannot be called a friend at all.

17 That foolish, scheming men of adharma
may not say that Krishna
did not try to stop
the warring Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas,

18 And also because I sincerely want to help
both parties –
that is why I am here.
That way I shall escape censure.

19 If he rejects my dharma-and-artha
after listening to it,
the fool will have none but himself
to blame.

20 Mahātmā Vidura!
If, serving the interests
of the Pāṇḍavas, I work out
a suitable peace,
the Kauravas will find
an escape from their doom.

21 If Duryodhana accepts
my suggestions of dharma-
and-artha and ahiṁsā,
conducive to peace,
I will merit the pūjā
of the Kauravas also.

22 But if this fails, I can assure you
all the kings of the world
will be to me
like deer to a lion."

23 Saying this, the chief of the Vṛṣṇis
and the bringer of happiness
to the Yādavas
stretched out on his soft bed.

## SECTION NINETY-THREE

1 And so the lovely starlit night passed
with two wise men
conversing pleasantly
(said Vaiśampāyana).

2 Mahātmā Vidura touched
on varied topics
relating to dharma-and-artha,
listening to the edifying words

3 Of Krishna, and mahā-radiant Krishna
listened attentively to Vidura.
The night passed swiftly,
to Vidura's regret.

4 Professional *sūta*-bards and singers
with sweet voices
woke Keśava-Krishna,
while conches and *dundubhi*-drums sounded.

5 Krishna, Dāśārha chief
and bull-brave Sātvata hero,
performed the rituals and ablutions
of the morning.

6 He *japa*-meditated and chanted
in front of the sacred fire; then,
Mādhava-Krishna dressed, put on ornaments,
and worshipped the sun.

7 Duryodhana and Subala's son Śakuni
approached never-defeated
Dāśārha-Krishna at his *saṁdhyā*,
and said to him:

8 "Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra is in the sabhā,
along with other Kauravas,
including Bhīṣma,
and all the earth's rulers.

9 They are waiting for you, Govinda-Krishna,
like gods waiting for Śakra-Indra."
Govinda-Krishna received them
with all courtesy.

10 When the flawless sun rose higher in the sky,
foe-crushing Janārdana-Krishna
gifted gold, dresses, cattle and horses
to Brahmins.

11 After never-defeated Dāśārha-Krishna had given away
semi-precious stones,
his charioteer approached him
and stood near him respectfully.

12 Dāruka soon returned with the huge,
magnificent chariot
pulled by excellent horses,
and mellifluent with tinkling *kiṁkiṇī*-bells.

13 Śaibya, Sugrīva, Meghapuṣpa and Balāhaka
were yoked
to Krishna's chariot,
which dazzled with radiance.

14 Śaibya was moss-green like a parrot's plumes,
Sugrīva red like a *kiṁśuka*-flower,
Meghapuspa cloud-grey,
Balāhaka white.

15 Śaibya was yoked on the right,
Sugrīva on the left,
and Meghapuṣpa and Balāhaka
behind them.

16 Stationed in the symbolic pennant
that fluttered on Krishna's chariot
was snake-devouring Virāṭa's son
Garuḍa himself.

17 Illustrious Krishna's chariot
gathered added radiance
from the presence of Garuḍa
on the war-flag.

18 The gold filigree-work,
and the golden flags and pennants
made the chariot glow like the sun
at the universe's dissolution.

19 Viśvakarman himself had fashioned
the chariot's Garuḍa-pennant,
the golden frame, and the different poles
and axles.

20 Gold, lapis lazuli, pearls, diamonds
and other precious gems,
and hundreds of tinkling bells
made the chariot a celestial vehicle.

21 Gold-carved lotuses, golden trees, tigers,
lions, boars; bulls,
deer, birds, stars, suns, and elephants
were designed on it.

22 Brass inlay-work decorated the inside,
and luxurious carpets
were strewn on the floor
of that splendid vehicle.

23 Seeing the divine gem-studded chariot,
whose wheels resounded like roaring clouds,
arrive,
mahā-minded Krishna

24 Did *pradakṣiṇa* round the sacred fire
and the Brahmins.
Janārdana-Krishna put on his dazzlingly refulgent
Kaustubha-gem,

25 And, surrounded by the Kauravas,
and guarded by the Vṛṣṇis,
Krishna, delight of the Yādavas,
assended the chariot.

26 After the Dāśārha hero had entered
the chariot,
all-dharma-knowing, superior-to-mortals,
wise Vidura,

27 Duryodhana, and Subala's son Śakuni
climbed into a second chariot
and followed
the foe-chastiser Krishna.

28 Sātyaki and Kṛtavarman,
and other Vṛṣṇi chariot-heroes
followed also –
on horses, elephants, and chariots.

29 The gold-carved, excellent-horsed chariots
of these heroes, O rājā Janamejaya,
noisily moving ahead,
were an eye-enchanting spectacle.

30 Celestially-radiant Krishna punctually
reached the spotlessly-swept main road,
immaculate enough even
for rāja-ṛṣis.

31 The music of cymbals, conches
and other instruments
accompanied Dāśārha-Krishna
as he drove on the main road.

32 Lion-strong, foe-chastising young heroes
surrounded the chariot
of Śauri-Krishna, and accompanied him
on his journey.

33 And thousands of others,
in varied and weird-looking dresses,
wielding swords, lances, and axes,
also followed Krishna.

34 Never-defeated-or-defeatable Dāśārha-Krishna
was followed
by five hundred elephants
and thousands of chariots.

35 O foe-crushing Janamejaya! The Kaurava capital
swarmed with old and young men and women
eager to catch a glimpse
of Janārdana-Krishna.

36 And women leaned on terraces and balconies
which seemed
almost to be collapsing
from the excess burden.

37 Krishna proceeded slowly, receiving the pūjā-respect
of the Kauravas,
listening to their sweet praises,
and returning their compliments.

38 The sky reverberated with the music
of conches and flutes
as Keśava-Krishna's followers
entered the sabhā.

39 The congregation of rājās horripilated
with delight
at the expectation of Krishna's arrival.
They all trembled

40 When they heard the thunderous noise,
like Parjanya-rain-clouds roaring,
of his chariot, they surmised
he was approaching.

41 The excellent Sātvata chief, Krishna,
approached the gate of the sabhā
and alighted
from his Kailāsa-tall chariot.

42 Radiant with the glorious energy
of new-formed clouds,
Krishna entered the sabhā
that looked like Mahendra-Indra's heaven.

43 Eclipsing the Kuru-planets,
mahā-illustrious Krishna entered like the sun,
holding Vidura's hand on one side,
and Sātyaki's on the other, O rājā Janamejaya.

44 Facing Vāsudeva-Krishna were Duryodhana
and Karṇa;
and behind him were the Vṛṣṇis
and Kṛtavarman.

45 Dhṛtarāṣṭra stood up to offer pūjā-respect
to Janārdana-Krishna;
Bhīṣma, Droṇa and the other kings
did likewise.

46 The Dāśārha hero Krishna approached
wisdom-inseeing monarch Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Droṇa, Bhīṣma,
and others who were standing.

47 When mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra
rose from his seat,
the thousands of rājās present
followed his example

48 A suitable, Jāmbu-gold-worked seat
called Sarvatobhadra,
on instructions from Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
was offered to Krishna.

49 Dharmātmā Mādhava-Krishna, smiling,
greeted rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and the other rājās
in order of seniority.

50 The rājās and lords of the earth
honoured Keśava-Krishna,
punisher-of-mortals Janārdana,
who had come to their sabhā.

51 The foe-crushing city-destroying Dāśārha hero
stood there,
and saw the ṛṣis he had met earlier,
lined up in the sky.
He saw the ṛṣis, under the leadership
of Nārada;

52 And, turning to Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
Dāśārha-Krishna said slowly:
"Ruler of the earth, the ṛṣis are watching
our meeting on earth.

53 Invite them, and offer them seats;
make them welcome.
If they remain standing,
how can any of us sit?

54 Arrange for the pūjā of the ātmans
of these purified munis."
Śāntanu's son saw the rsis arrive
at the sabhā-gate,

55 And quickly ordered his servants
to bring the seats.
Many exquisitely beautiful and luxurious seats
were arranged,

56 All gold-embroidered and gem-studded.
The ṛṣis accepted the homage
and made themselves comfortable;
after which, O Bharata Janamejaya,

57 Krishna also sat down,
as did the other rājās.
Duḥśāsana offered a splendid seat
to Sātyaki.

58 Viviṁśati offered a golden seat,
near Krishna,
to Kṛtavarman,
As for Duryodhana and Karṇa,

59 Those two self-confident mahātmās
shared a seat.
The Gāndhāra-rājā Śakuni,
surrounded by Gāndhāra chiefs,

60 Occupied a seat with his son.
O lord-of-the-earth Janamejaya!
Vidura's seat was decorated with gems,
and draped with white deer-skin.

61 Mahā-minded Vidura sat next to Śauri-Krishna.
The rājās
looked intensely and long
at the chief of the Dāśārhas

62 As if they were drinking *amṛta*,
but remained unsatiated.
Janārdana-Krishna, dressed in saffron,
looked like an *atasī*-flax-blossom.

63 He sat in the middle of the sabhā
Like a sapphire studded in gold.

64 The entire assembly fell silent,
Govinda-Krishna seemed
to be absorbed in thought.
Not one voice was heard.

## SECTION NINETY-FIVE

1 All sat down. The rajas were all silent.
His teeth gleaming,
Krishna said in his *dundubhi*-drum
resonant voice,

2 Booming like clouds at the end of summer –
looking at Dhṛtarāṣṭra
but addressing the sabhā,
Mādhava-Krishna said:

3 "I am here because I feel it is still possible,
O Bharata,
to prevent the bloodshed
of Kaurava and Pāṇḍava heroes.

4 You know all there is in the world
to know;
what is there left for me to add,
O foe-crushing king?

5 O ruler of the earth, your dynasty excels
the dynastics of all these rājās:
it is noble, learned in *śruti*,
it has all the guṇa-virtues.

6 Pity, sympathy, compassion, O Bharata,
not harming others,
simplicity, fortitude and truth –
these are Kaurava qualities.

7 A member of such a noble family, O rājā,
should never do anything
that he will later regret
having done.

8 O incomparable respected Kaurava! *Tāta*!
You bear the responsibility
of Kaurava deceitfulness, whether planned
or put in practice.

9 Your sons, led by Duryodhana,
are acting contrary
to dharma-and artha,
and behaving like callous men.

10 O bull-brave hero! They have discarded
all sense of dignity,
have surrendered to greed,
and are harming their own friends.

11 A mahā-calamity will overtake
the Kauravas
and destroy the world,
if not prevented in good time.

12 It can be prevented. You have the power,
O bull-brave Bharata.
My honest opinion is that peace
is still negotiable.

13 O lord of the world, O Kaurava rājā,
peace rests with you –
and with me. You must convince your sons,
I the Pāṇḍavas.

14 Your sons and their followers must obey you!
O Indra-among-rājās;
it is for their own good
that they should do so.

15 If you wish to continue as ruler,
it is for your good –
and the good of the Pāṇḍavas –
that peace be established.

16 Think this over carefully,
O lord of the world,
and act so that the Pāṇḍavas
may become your allies.

17 Let the Pāṇḍavas support you
in dharma-and-artha, O rājā.
It is very hard to obtain allies
such as they.

18 If the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
are on your side,
even Indra and the gods cannot harm you –
how can mere kings?

19 Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, Karṇa, Viviṁśati,
Aśvatthāman, Vikarṇa, Somadatta, Bāhlīka,

20 The Sindhu and Kaliṅga kings, Sudakṣiṇa of the
Kāmbojas,
Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīmsena, Savyasācī-Arjuna and the twins,

21 Energetic Sātyaki and the mahā-chariot-hero Yuyutsu–
Which man will dare oppose them all, O bull-brave
Bharata?

22 If the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas
are united,
you will gain the entire world,
you will be utterly invincible.

23 The earth-rulers now your equals,
O foe-vanquishing king,
and even those better than you, will honour you
if unity is achieved.

24 Your life will be spent happily,
with you protected on all sides
by sons, grandsons, fathers, brothers,
and friends.

25 O lord of the earth,
then will you truly enjoy this earth,
cherishing the Pāṇḍavas
as you did in the not so distant past.

26 United with your sons
and with the Pāṇḍavas,
you will rout all enemies.
What an enormous achievement!

27 If you make peace with sons, relatives, and well-wishes,
O foe-crushing lord of men,
the territories won by them
will be yours to enjoy.

28 But if, O mahārāja, there is war, all is ruined.
O rājā!
What dharma do you see in both parties
destroying each other?

29 Tell me – how will you react if you see
the Pāṇḍavas all killed,
or your own powerful sons all wiped out,
O bull-brave Bharata?

30 Your sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu
are all weapons-experts and all war-eager.
Save them
from this mahā-calamity.

31 When the battle is over,
you will certainly not expect
to find all still living.
Chariot-heroes will kill chairot-heroes.

32 The rājās of the earth
who have gathered here will,
in their anger, kill the world's people
indiscriminately.

33 O rājā! Save the world.
Save the people of the world.
Be yourself, and end all this,
O delight of the Kauravas!

34 Save these kings from mahā-doom, O rājā!
They are ārya-noble,
liberal, generous, virtuous, honourable,
and consanguineous.

35 Let these earth-rulers meet
in an atmosphere of peace,
eating and drinking together,
and then return to their homes,

36 Dressed in excellent robes,
sporting neckchains, honouring each other,
cleansed of hate and bitterness,
O foe-crushing bull-brave Bharata.

37 Before you die, revive the love you once had
for the Pāṇḍavas.
O bull-brave Bharata,
let justice prevail.

38 They were orphaned in childhood;
you brought them up.
Treat them as you would your own sons,
O bull-brave Bharata.

39 They deserve your protection,
especially in times of distress.
Do not discard your sense of dharma-and-artha,
O bull-brave Bharata.

40 The Pāṇḍavas send you
their most respectful greetings, O rājā.
They say: 'Your command brought sorrow
on us and our followers.

41 We have spent twelve years
in forest-exile;
the thirteenth year we spent
in disguise.

42 We had complete faith that our father
would not break his word,
so we did not break ours.
Our Brahmin followers know this.

43 We have kept our word; you should keep yours,
O bull-brave Bharata.
We have suffered enough;
we now demand our kingdom's share, O rājā.

44 You are acquainted
with dharma-and-artha;
you are our elder, so we accepted suffering.
Help us now.

45 Behave with us as would our father and mother.
O Bharata,
treat us as a guru would treat
his disciples.

46 We have acted as we should,
you must now act as you should.
If we were wrong,
then correct us, father!

47 Follow the path of dharma yourself,
and guide us too.'
O bull-brave Bharata, your sons send this message
to the assembly:

48 'A sabhā that knows dharma
should not condone injustice.
Where adharma stifles dharma,
and untruth truth,

49 And the sabhā members are aware of it –
then they are doomed.
When dharma, pierced by adharma,
appeals to a sabhā,

50 And the arrow is not extracted,
it pierces the sabha-members.
Dharma will destroy them
like a river uprooting trees.'

51 O bull-brave Bharata! The Pāṇḍavas,
quietly waiting for dharma to be vindicated,
have spoken with justice,
truth, and dharma.

52 What can you tell them,
O lord of men,
other than you will return their kingdom?
Let the lords of this sabhā decide.

53 If you feel my words
are full of dharma-and-artha,
then save the Kṣatriyas from the noose of death,
O bull-brave hero!

54 Cultivate serenity,
and do not let anger sway you.
Give back to the Pāṇḍavas their ancestral share,
O excellent Bharata,

55 Accomplish your desire,
and enjoy with your sons what life offers.
You know Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
follows dharma;

56 You know how he has behaved
with you and your sons.
He survived the lac-house and exile;
he has returned, O lord of men.

57 O rājā! You and your sons exiled him
to Indraprastha.
There he made allies
of the rulers of the earth,

58 But he continued to have the highest regard
for you.
This is the man that Subala's son Śakuni
tricked

59 Out of his kingdom and wealth.
Even when insulted,
when Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī was dragged
into the royal sabhā,

60 Noble-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira unswervingly observed
Kṣatriya-dharma.
I am here for your good
of the Pāṇḍavas, O Bharata!

61 You are confusing artha
with lack-of-artha
and lack-of-artha with artha.
Do not destroy all your subjects, O rājā,
by forgetting that dharma-and-artha
brings happiness.

62 Curb your sons, O lord of the world;
they are victims of their greed.
Pṛthā-Kuntī's foe-crushing wons
will honour you and fight for you.
O foe-vanquishing king!"

63 The rulers of the earth present agreed
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
with these sentiments,
and had nothing to say.

## SECTION NINETY-SIX



1 These words of mahātmā-Keśava-Krishna
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
so filled the sabhā with wonder
that they horripilated.

2 The rulers of the earth pondered deeply
all the implications,
and not one ventured
a reply.

3 Complete silence prevailed
in that gathering of rājās.
Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma
said to the Kuru assembly:

4 "Listen whole-heartedly to the truths
I place before you.
If they appeal to you,
act on them accordingly.

5 In the long-distant past, rājā Dambodhava
was said to have conquered
the whole world
and become its sole emperor.

6 Every day, at dawn,
the mahā-chariot-hero king
would wake up and ask
the Brahmins and Kṣatriyas:

7 'Is there a Śūdra, Vaiśya, Kṣatriya,
  or Brahmin alive
who can equal, or excel, my prowess
  on the battlefield?'

8 Repeating these words, the rājā travelled
  the length and breadth of the world,
mahā-proud of himself,
  oblivious to everything else.

9 Some very learned, Veda-proficient Brahmins,
  who were absolutely fearless,
warned the rājā
  not to be boastful.

10 Despite the warning, he asked them
  the same question.
The Brahmins faced the proud
  affluence-blinded king;

11 The twice-born mahātmās
  of enormous tapasyā,
familiar with the wisdom of the Vedaṣ,
  excited, said to the rājā:

12 'There are two persons who excel all,
  O rājā,
and who have defeated many in battle.
  You are their inferior.'

13 The rājā kept asking the Brahmins:
  'Who are these two heroes?
Where are they?
  Where were they born?'

14 The Brahmins replied: 'We have heard
  they are Nara and Nārāyaṇa,
born on earth.
  King, challenge them!

15 We have heard that Nara-Nārāyaṇa
  are mahātmās,
presently involved in severe tapasyā
  on Gandhamādana hill.'

16 The rājā assembled a six-fold army
of chariots, horses, elephants,
camels, foot-soldiers and reinforcements,
and marched to challenge
the undefeated two
allegedly superior to him.

17 He searched out the two practisers
of tapasyā
who had sought shelter on rugged,
fearful Gandhamādana.

18 The king saw the two finest-among-men
*puruṣottamas* emaciated
with hunger and thirst, their veins visible,
exposed to wind and cold
and the fierce rays
of the sun.

19 He approached them, touched their feet,
and enquired about their health.
They offered him a seat,
water, roots and fruits.

20 They asked the rājā,
'What would you like from us?'
He repeated to them
what he said to all people:

21 'I have, by the strength of my arms,
overcome the earth
and killed my enemies.
I am here to challenge you.

22 As your guest, this is the only hospitality
I want.'
They replied: 'Rājā, no greed or wrath
touches this āshram,

23 There is no war here.
We do not carry weapons.
Seek war elsewhere,
where there are Kṣatriyas.'

24 But he kept repeating his request,
and the two ṛṣis kept refusing him;
they tried to pacify him
(continued Paraśurāma).

25 Belligerent Dambodbhava continued to challenge them,
O Bharata.
Finally Nara picked up a fistful of grass,
and said:

26 'Come, Kṣatriya, let us fight!
Alert your army,
pick up your weapons
and be prepare for battle.

27 Put on your coat of mail,
and all else you have.
You seem eager for battle – fine!
You will have it.

28 You dare to taunt Brahmins.
Face the consequences!'
Dambodhava said: 'If you, O tapasyā-practiser,
think your weapon fit,

29 Very well, I will fight you
and your grassblades!'
Saying this, he let loose a rain
of fierce arrows –

30 Fired by an army bent on killing
the man of tapasya
who, wielding the blades of grass,
deftly deflected the arrows
that could rip open
the flesh of foes.

31 The never-defeated *muni* of tapasya
shot grassy arrows
that could not be repulsed,
with amazing results.

32 Charged with māyā-energy,
shot by one who never missed,
the grass-shafts cut off the ears and noses
of the soldiers.

33 The sky, thick with blades of grass,
was a mass of white!
Rājā Dambodbhava touched Nara's feet,
imploring, 'Save me!'

34 Nara, who shelters those who seek his refuge,
said:
'Be a dharmātmā and help Brahmins.
Do not presume.

35 O tiger-among-men!
No Kṣatriya who knows his dharma,
no city-conqueror should behave
as you have behaved.

36 O rājā! Never let your pride
belittle inferior or superior.
Gather wisdom, avoid greed,
control your ego-*ahaṁkāra*;

37 Cultivate discipline, peace, gentleness;
protect your subjects;
never challenge anybody
without knowing his potential first.

38 Go. And may you prosper.
Never act as you now did.
Cherish Brahmins and be mindful
of your prosperity.'

39 The rājā touched the feet
of the two mahātmās
and, returning to his capital,
assiduously practised dharma.

40 That was a mahā-remarkable feat
that Nara performed.
The guṇa-qualities of Nārāyaṇa
are even greater

41 O rājā, be sensible and go to Gāṇḍīva-wielding
Arjuna, discarding your pride,
and ensure that Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
does not string his Gāṇḍīva.

42 These eight weapons – Kākudīka,
Śuka, Nāka,
Akṣisaṁtarjana, Saṁtāna, Nartaka, Ghora,
and Āsyamodaka –

43 Despatch their victims to certain death.
They correspond to eight passions:
kāma, anger, greed, vanity,
insolence, pride,

44 Malice, and selfishness. Affected by them,
men become as if possessed;
they lose their senses
and become stupefied.

45 Struck by them, men sleep heavily,
or wander restless,
act crazily, wildly defecate and urinate,
weep and laugh.

46 It is difficult to face Arjuna
on the battlefield;
his friend is world-creator,
all-karma-knower Nārāyaṇa.

47 O Bharata! What man in all the three worlds
can defeat Jiṣṇu-Arjuna,
the ape-bannered hero
absolutely without equal in battle?

48 Pārtha-Arjuna has countless virtues,
but he is excelled by Janārdana-Krishna.
You know all about Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
the son of Kuntī.

49 Nara-Nārāyaṇa are Arjuna-and-Keśava-Krishna.
Mahārāja, know this well.
They are the twin-Puruṣottama,
the finest-of-men.

50 If you know this already,
if you do not mistrust me, O Bharata,
then take the noble path of peace
with the Pāṇḍavas

51 If you are convinced that strife with them
means trouble for you,
seek peace, not war,
O excellent Bharata.

52 The Kuru family is among the world's
most highly respected.
Enhance this dignity. Seek your good.
May you prosper."

## SECTION NINETY-SEVEN

1 After Jamadagni's son had finished
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
bhagavān ṛṣi Kaṇva said to Duryodhana
and the Kaurava sabhā:

2 Lokapitāmahā Brahmā, the grandsire of the worlds,
is eternal and undecaying.
So are the two bhagavān ṛṣis
Nara-Nārāyaṇa.

3 Of Aditi's sons,
only Viṣṇu
is eternal and invincible,
the undecaying lord of lords.

4 The others – moon, sun, earth,
water, air, fire,
sky, planets, stars –
are subject to decay.

5 When the universe ends,
they vanish from the three worlds;
then the process of creation starts again –
and yet again.

6 Others have a brief life-span –
humans, animals, birds,
and creatures that are born
from other creatures.

7 Rājās, who enjoy immense affluence
  till the time of their death,
are re-born
  into good or bad karma.

8 You should make every effort to ensure peace
  with Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira.
Let the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas
  together rule the earth.

9 Suyodhana-Duryodhana, do not say, "I am strong!"
  O bull-brave hero,
one soon finds many who are stronger
  than oneself.

10 Physical strength hardly matters
  to the really strong, O Kaurava.
The Pāṇḍavas, with the prowess of the gods,
  are really strong.

11 There is the very old story
  of Mātali
who was looking for a suitable husband
  for his daughter.

12 Three-worlds-ruling Indra had a charioteer
  named Mātali,
who had only one daughter,
  a girl of renowned beauty.

13 She had the figure of a goddess;
  her name was Guṇakeśi,
and she excelled all
  in grace and loveliness.

14 Mātali and his wife, realising that the time
  for giving her away in marriage
had arrived,
  became anxious, O rājā.

15 He thought: *How sad for a noble,*
  *cultivated family*
*with the highest traditions*
  *to have a grown-up daughter.*

16 *The mother's family, the father's,*<br>
*and the family*<br>
*into which she marries –*<br>
*all three face this daughter problem.*

17 *I have searched everywhere*<br>
*in the world of men and of gods,*<br>
*and fatled to find*<br>
*an eligible husband for her.*

18 Gods, anti-gods, gandharvas, humans,<br>
the various ṛṣis –<br>
he found none among them suitable<br>
for his daughter.

19 Mātali discussed it one night<br>
with his wife Sudharmā,<br>
and decided to explore<br>
the world of the Nāgas.

20 He said: "I find none<br>
among gods and humans<br>
to equal Guṇakeśī in looks;<br>
perhaps I will among the Nāgas."

21 With these words, he did *pradakṣiṇa*<br>
around Sudharmā<br>
and, smelling his daughter's head,<br>
went to the nether-world.

## SECTION NINETY-EIGHT

1 On his way (continued Kaṇva)<br>
Mātali met the maha-ṛṣi Nārada<br>
who happened to be going<br>
to see Varuṇa.

2 "Where are you going?" asked Nārada.<br>
"Is it on orders, O charioteer,<br>
from Śatakratu-Indra<br>
or is it on personal work?"

3 Since Nārada was travelling
on the same road,
Mātali explained to him
the reason for his journey.

4 The *muni* said: "Then let us travel together.
I am here,
coming from heaven, on my way to meet
lord-of-the-waters Varuṇa.

5 I will show you the nether regions
of the world, Mātali;
and together perhaps we will find
a suitable groom."

6 The two mahātmās, Mātali and Nārada,
descended into the nether regions,
to meet Lokapāla Varuṇa,
the lord of waters.

7 Nārada received the pūjā-respect deserving
of a deva-ṛṣi,
and Mātali received the homage accorded
to Mahendra-Indra.

8 Pleased, they promptly announced
their intentions to Varuṇa,
who gave them permission to explore
the Nāga-realms.

9 Nārada was familiar with all
the beings of the nether realms,
and he explained them
to his companion:

10 "You have seen Varuṇa,
his sons and grandsons.
See now the affluent Sarvatobhadra
Varuṇa-realm.

11 The mahā-wise son of Varuṇa,
the lord of the cows,
a son renowned for character, piety,
and dignity,

12 Is dear lotus-eyed Puṣkara.
He is eye-grippingly handsome,
Soma's daughter has chosen him
as her husband.

13 Soma's second daughter Jyotsnākālī, equalling
the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī in loveliness
chose Aditi's eldest son Sūrya
as her chief husband.

14 Look at this golden palace of Varuṇa,
O *sakhā*-friend of the lord of the gods;
this is where the gods
attain godhood.

15 The refulgent weapons that you see
in front of you, Mātali,
were once owned by the now dispossessed
Daitya-antigods.

16 Mātali! They are inexhaustible,
and after firing they return to the sender.
Won by the gods, they can be used only
with special powers.

17 The gods live here now, Mātali;
but earlier it was inhabited
by rākṣasas and Daityas
who had celestial weapons.

18 Look at the fire ablaze
in the lake of Varuṇa!
Look at Viṣṇu's *cakra* blurred
in the fiery smoke!

19 This world-annihilating bow
is full of knots or *gāṇḍi*.
This is the god-guarded original
of the Gāṇḍīva.

20 It has the shooting power
of a hundred thousand bows;
in actual action,
its power is even greater.

21 It can subjugate the near-invincible rājās
who are friendly to rākṣasas.
Brahman-knowing Brahmā
fashioned it.

22 Mahā Śakra-Indra has declared it
as the greatest asset of Indra-like kings,
and the rājā-of-the-waters' sons
possess this mahā weapon.

23 Stored in the royal canopy room,
it becomes Varuṇa's canopy
and showers cool water,
as clouds do.

24 The water that pours from its canopy
is moon-pure
and so dazzling that human eyes
cannot see it.

25 There are many sights worth seeing
in the nether realms,
but we are pressed for time,
and we must hurry on."

## SECTION NINETY-NINE

1 "This city, situated in the navel
of the Nāga-world,"
continued Nārada, "is Pātāla,
where Daityas and Dānavas live.

2 Creatures of earth who are sucked here
by whirlpools
shriek with terrifying fear
as they plunge in Pātāla.

3 Here blazes the Asura-fire
that feeds on water;
it is fixed in one place
by the will of the gods.

4 After destroying their enemies,
the gods drank and hid *amṛta* here.
This spot determines the waxing and waning
of the moon.

5 Here the horse-headed son-of-Aditi,
golden Viṣṇu,
rises on auspicious occasions
and disseminates the sacred verses.

6 Because whatever is watery
falls inside this realm,
it is called Pātāla,
or 'That in which All Falls'.

7 The elephant Airāvata scoops cool water
from this realm into the clouds,
and Mahendra-Indra sends it down
as rain.

8 Here live water-animals of all kinds
including *timi*-fish,
drinking the water that resembles
the rays of the moon.

9 Some creatures of the Pātāla-realm
become lifeless
when touched by sunrays,
and revive in the moony night.

10 The moon rises here every night;
her rays like two arms
reach out and revive them
with invigorating *amṛta*-nectar.

11 Afflicted by Kāla, the adharma-following
Daitya sons of Aditi,
who were dispossessed of lustre by Vāsava-Indra,
languish here.

12 The lord-of-all-creatures named Bhūtapati
practised severe tapasyā here
for the welfare
of all creatures.

13 Here are the mahā-ṛṣi Brahmins
who took the *go*-vow and,
emancipated with breath-control and Veda-study,
attained heaven.

14 The *go*-vow taker is the man
who sleeps anywhere,
lives and dresses with what others
give him.

15 Here are the descendants
of the incomparable elephant Supratīka:
Airāvata the rājā of elephants, Kumuda,
Vāmana, Añjana.

16 Find in this realm the talented bridegroom
to please you, Mātali,
and I will request him
to accept your daughter.

17 There is also a dazzling Egg
in these waters,
unmoving, unhatched,
since the creation of the universe.

18 No one knows its father or mother,
and I have never heard anyone
explain its birth
or its nature.

19 At the end of Cosmic Time Kāla,
a mahā-fire issues from it, Mātali,
and consumes the moving and unmoving life
of the three worlds."

20 Mātali listened to the words of Nārada,
and said:
"None pleases me here.
Let us quickly go elsewhere."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED

1 “This beautiful, far-extending city,”
said Nārada,
“is Hiraṇyapura, home of māyā-practising
Daityas and Dānavas.

2 It was planned with precise attention
to detail
by the anti-god artificer Maya,
and placed in Pātāla.

3 The mahā-energetic thousand-māyā-practising
Dānavas live here.
In the distant past, they were heroes
given boons

4 By Śakra-Indra, Yama, Varuṇa, Dhanada-Kubera,
and anyone else
who failed to bring them totally
under subjugation.

5 The Kālakhañja anti-gods
born from the feet of Viṣṇu,
and the Yātudhāna anti-gods
born from the feet of Brahmā,

6 Have fearful teeth, and fierce energy;
they are strong as wind,
and masters of māyā;
they all live here,

7 As do the Nivātakavaca rākṣasas
who cannot be defeated in battle.
You should know even Śakra-Indra
cannot defeat them.

8 Mātali, you and your son Gomukha,
and Śacī’s husband, the gods’ rājā Indra,
and his son,
were repulsed by them.

9 Look at these gold and silver palaces, Mātali,
constructed
with the most consummate knowledge
of the principles of architecture,

10 Glittering with lapis lazuli and coral,
and white *arka*-marble,
studded
with semi-precious *vajrasāra* diamonds.

11 Yet-they seem to be made with brick.
Some shine like *padmarāga* gems,
but are made
of stone and wood.

12 They blaze like the refulgent sun,
they blaze like fire,
like nets of gems and jewels;
they rise high and numerous.

13 Impossible for words to capture their beauty,
or describe their artistry.
They are large, luxurious,
and utilitarian.

14 Look at the recreation centres
of the Daityas,
their beds and couches, mahā-expensive cups,
gem-studded seats.

15 Look at these cloud-massive walls!
The water-fountains!
The spontaneously-flowering-and-fruiting
transplantable trees!

16 Find a bridegroom here of your choice,
O Mātali,
or let us move on to another area
of Pātāla."

17 Mātali replied: "O celestial ṛṣi,
I cannot do anything
that will displease
the heaven-dwellers.

18 Though brothers, the gods and Dāvava anti-gods
are in conflict.
How can I enter into an alliance
with enemies?

19 More expedient that we go elsewhere.
Let us leave the Dānavas.
I know you.
You are a mischief-monger."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED ONE

1 "This is the region
of the snake-eating birds,"
said Nārada, "the lovely-feathered,
tireless fliers.

2 They are the progeny of the six sons:
Vinatā's son Garuḍa;
Sumukha, Sunāma, Sunetra, and Suvarcā,
O charioteer,

3 Suruca, and the rājā-of-birds
called Subala.
Mātali, they have all descended
from Vinatā's race.

4 Hundreds of thousands of birds
of royal lineage
have produced multitudinous others
of Kaśyapa's race.

5 They are all vigorous;
all have the auspicious Śrīvatsa-mark;
all seek prosperity
with indefatigable energy.

6 By karma they are Kṣatriyas;
they are ruthless, they feed on snakes.
Their ferocity bars them
from Brahmā's realm.

7 Let me give you their names
according to their status.
Listen, Mātali. This race is renowned,
because Viṣṇu favours it.

8 Their god is Viṣṇu,
They worship Viṣṇu,
Viṣṇu is in their hearts,
Their eternal refuge is Viṣṇu.

9 Suvarṇacūḍa, Nāgāśi, Dāruṇa, Caṇḍatuṇḍaka,
Anila, Anala, Viśālākṣa, Kuṇḍalī,

10 Paṅkajit, Vajraviṣkambha, Vainateya, Vāmana,
Vātavega, Diśacakṣu, Nimeṣa, Animiṣa,

11 Trirāva, Sapatarāva, Vālmīki, Dvīpaka,
Daityadvīpa, Sariddvīpa, Sārasa, Padmaketana,

12 Sumukha, Citraketu, Citrabarha, Anagha,
Meṣahṛt, Kumuda, Dakṣa, Sarpānta, Sahabhojana,

13 Gurubhāra, Kapota, Suryanetra, Cirāntaka,
Viṣṇudharmā, Kumāra, Paribarha, Hari,

14 Susvara, Madhuparka, Hemavarṇa,
Mālaya, Mātariśvā, Niśākara, Divākara –

15 These descendants of Garuḍa
live in one area;
they are the ones
who are the most famous.

16 If, however, there is none here
who pleases you, Mātali,
let us proceed elsewhere
in search of a bridegroom."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWO

1 "This area is called Rasātala,"
continued Nārada,
"the seventh layer of Pātāla.
This is the place
where the nectar-born cow-mother
Surabhi lives.

2 Her milk is the essence
of all earthly food;
its unique rasa is the essence
of the six different tastes.

3 Faultless, she was born
from the nectar-gratified mouth
of Pitāmaha-Brahmā, from which in the past
emanated excellences.

4 One jet of her milk,
falling on the earth,
created a lake
which is the pure, holy Sea-of-Milk.

5 The edges of the Sea-of Milk
are surrounded
with flower-like foam,
sipped by excellent *munis.*

6 They are called the foam-drinkers, Mātali.
They practise such severe tapasyā
that even the gods
fear them.

7 Surabhi has four calves, Mātali,
who are together responsible
for the four quarters;
they bear the load of these directions.

8 Surabhi's calf named Surūpā
bears the eastern load;
her calf named Haṁsikā
supports the southern load.

9 The western, which is guarded by Varuṇa,
is borne, Mātali,
by Subhadrā the cosmic-formed
and generous-dispositioned.

10 Mātali! The calf named Sarvakāmadughā
bears the load
of the dharma-based north
guarded by Ilavitā's son Kubera.

11 The gods and the anti-gods together
churned the waters
of the milk ocean, using Mandara
as the churning-rod,

12 And they distilled *vāruṇi*-wine, Mātali,
and prosperity,
and *amṛta*, the horse Uccaiḥśravas-rāja,
and the gem Kaustubha.

13 Surabhi's udders yield milk
that is *sudhā* to the *sudhā*-minded,
*svadhā* to the *svadhā*,
and *amṛta* to the *amṛta*.

14 The song sung in the past
by Rasātala's inhabitants
can still be heard in this world
by learned men:

15 "The realm of the Nāgas
is heaven;
Svarga and Vimāna are heaven;
Triviṣṭapa is heaven;
But no heaven is more heavenly
than Rasātala."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THREE

1 "This city is called Bhogavati,"
explained Nārada,
"ruled by Vāsuki,
and similar to Devarāja Indra's Amarāvatī.

2 Presiding here is Śeṣa-nāga,
whose marvellous tapasyā,
unparalleled in this world,
holds the earth together.

3 His body is as large as Kailāsa hill;
he is thousand-headed and fiery-tongued;
he wears ornaments;
he is mahā-powerful.

4 Surasā's sons live here,
beyond pain and suffering –
nāga-serpents of different sizes,
variously-ornamented,

5 Thousands of them, all fierce,
auspiciously marked
with gem-signs, svastikas, *cakras,*
and *kamaṇḍalukas.*

6 Some are thousand-headed,
some have five hundred faces;
some have a thousand heads,
some have only three.

7 Some have two, some five,
some have seven faces.
All have mountain-huge bodies,
all are mahā-hedonists.

8 There are thousands – millions –
hundreds of millions of Nāgas – countless!
Let me name you
the most famous:

9 Vāsuki, Takṣaka, Karkotaka, Dhanañjaya,
Kāliya, Nahuṣa, Kambala, Aśvatara,

10 Bāhyakuṇḍa, Maṇināga, Apūraṇa, Khaga,
Vāmana, Elapatra, Kukura, Kukuṇa,

11 Āryaka, Nandaka, Kalaśa, Potaka,
Kailāsaka, Piñjaraka, the Nāga Airāvata,

12 Sumanomukha, Dadhimukha, Śaṅkha, Nanda,
Upananda, Āpta, Koṭaraka, Śikhi, Niṣṭhūrika,

13 Tittiri, Hastibhadra, Kumuda, Mālyapiṇḍaka,
Two lotus-named – Puṇḍarīka, Puṣpa –
Mudgaraparṇaka,

14 Karavīra, Pīṭharaka, Saṁvṛtta, Vṛtta,
Piṇḍāra, Bilvapatra, Mūṣikāda, Śirīṣaka,

15 Dilīpa, Śaṅkhaśīrṣa, Jyotiṣka, Aparājita,
Kauravya, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Kuhura, Kṛśaka,

16 Virajā, Dhāraṇa, Subāhu, Mukhara, Jaya,
Badhira, Andha, Viśuṇḍi, Virasa, Surasa.

17 These and many others are descendants
of Kaśyapa.
Mātali! Is there any among them you approve
as a satisfactory bridegroom?"

18 While Nārada was speaking,
Mātali observed intently;
Mātali seemed to be highly satisfied,
and he asked:

19 "Who is that resplendent being
standing in front
of Āryaka and Kaurava –
of what family?

20 Who are his father and mother?
His lineage?
He stands like a maha-dignified flagstaff
of his family.

21 O deva-ṛṣi, he looks young, handsome,
patient, intelligent.
I think he will make an excellent husband
for Guṅakeśī."

22 Nārada noticed the pleasurable interest
of Mātali in Sumukha;
so he provided information
about his birth and background.

23 "His family is the Airāvata,
he is a Nāga-rājā –
Sumukha, Āryaka's grandson,
maternally Vāmana's grandson.

24 His father, the Nāga-chief Cikura,
was only recently,
O Mātali, killed by the son of Vinatā,
Garuḍa."

25 Matali joyfully said to Narada:
"My friend,
I select this excellent Nāga
as my daughter's husband.

26 I am completely satisfied.
Do your best to convince him.
O *muni*! See that he does not refuse
my beloved daughter."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FOUR

1 Muni Nārada listened to the words of Mātali
(continued Kaṇva) and then,
O Kaurava descendant, he addressed himself
to the Nāga-rājā Āryaka.

2 Nārada said: "This is Mātali,
Śakra-Indra's charioteer and friend,
a strong, worthy, noble man,
O Āryaka.

3 He is Indra's loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend,
adviser and charioteer.
In war after war, his and Vāsava-Indra's valour
have proved to be the same.

4 In wars between gods and anti-gods,
Mātali wills
the thousand-horsed, always-victorious chariot
as he wishes.

5 The horses he trains gain Vāsava-Indra
victories in the sky;
and he tracks down the foes
of the Bala-slayer-Indra.

6 He has a graceful-hipped daughter
uneqalled in beauty,
a girl gentle, truthful, well-bred, accomplished,
name Guṇakeśī.

7 He has searched the three worlds,
O radiant one,
and finally chosen your grandson Sumukha
to be her husband.

8 If this pleases you, O excellent snake,
do not delay
in making whatever arrangements
may be required.

9 As Lakṣmī is in Viṣṇu's family,
Svāhā in Vibhāvasu-Agni's,
so will slender-waisted Guṇakeśī
be in yours.

10 I urge you to accept Guṇakeśī
for your grandson.
Her loveliness equals that of Śacī,
queen of Vāsava-Indra.

11 Sumukha is fatherless, yet we select him
out of the respect
we have for you
and the Airāvata family.

12 Mātali has been favourably impressed
by Sumukha's nobility
and self-discipline,
and gladly bestows his daughter.

13 It is fitting that you should reciprocate
Mātali's regard for you."
Āryaka was simultaneously pleased and pensive;
he said to Nārada:

14 "My son is dead, and my grandson
is selected as bridegroom.
But how can I wish to have Guṇakeśī
as our daughter-in-law?

15 Your words, mahā-ṛṣi,
do not find favour with me.
Not that I disrespect you, –
you are a *sakhā*-friend of Śakra-Indra.

16 The reason is my mind is upset
by the fact
that the father of Sumukha,
my mahā-radiant son,

17 Was devoured by Garuḍa, Vinatā's son.
What depresses me, *prabhu*-lord,
is that Garuḍa vowed to devour Sumukha
after a month.

18 This cannot be averted, because Garuḍa
is determined and persistent.
Lovely-feathered Suparṇa Garuḍa's vow
has destroyed my happiness."

19 Mātali said: "I have a plan.
Your son's son Sumukha
has been chosen by me
as my son-in-law.

20 Let your grandson accompany me and Nārada
to Vāsava-Indra,
the three-worlds-protecting
lord of the gods.

21 I will try to neutralise the vow
of Suparṇa-Garuda.
I will find out how long Sumukha
has to live, O excellent snake.

22 So permit Sumukha to come with me
to meet-Deveśa-Indra
for the accomplishment of this purpose.
May you prosper!"

23 All of them, accompanied by Sumukha,
went to Śakra-Indra,
the rājā of the gods. They saw him seated
in mahā-radiant glory.

24 With him was illustrious
four-armed Bhagavān Viṣṇu.
Nārada explained to them
the dilemma of Mātali.

25 Viṣṇu said to Puraṁdara-Indra,
the lord of the worlds:
"Give him *amṛta*-nectar,
and make him a god.

26 Vāsava-Indra, be pleased with Mātali,
Nārada and Sumukha,
and see that their wish
is fulfilled."

27 Puraṁdara-Indra thought of the great strength
of Vinatā's son Garuḍa,
and said to Viṣṇu:
"Give them the amṛta yourself."

28 Viṣṇu replied: "You are the lord
of the worlds' moving and unmoving life.
*Vibho!* Radiant one!
Who can refuse you?"

29 So Indra extended the life of Pannaga-Sumukha,
but the slayer
of Bala and Vṛtra
did not give *amṛta* to him.

30 His life-span extended, Sumukha,
the Sweet-Faced,
was thrilled; he married,
and went to his home.

31 Nārada and Āryaka,
pleased at the success of their mission
left after honouring
the mahā-radiant rājā of the gods.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIVE

1 Mahā-powerful Garuḍa (said Kaṇva)
heard the news
that Śakra-Indra had granted long life
to Sumukha.

2 Sky-wandering, lovely-plumaged Garuḍa,
flapping his wings
in violent gusts of wind,
swooped down on Vāsava-Indra.

3 He said: "What wrong have I done,
*bhagavan,* revered one,
to be denied my food?
You granted me the boon, now you refuse it.

4 The supreme lord of all creatures
ordained my food to be such –
why have you acted
to the contrary?

5 I chose this mahā-Nāga,
I settled his life-span.
He was to be the source of my subsistence,
and my progeny's.

6 Now that your boon protects him,
I dare not kill other Nāgas either.
You are playing with me. You are whimsical,
O rājā of the gods!

7 What will happen to me and others
of my family
and still others who attend on me?
Relent, O Vāsava-Indra.

8 O slayer-of-Bala-and-Vṛtra,
I have indeed deserved this –
I, a lord of the three worlds,
accepted servitude.

9 So long as you live, O Deveśa-Indra,
even Viṣṇu cannot curb me,
for you are the eternal
three-worlds-ruler.

10 Dakṣa's daughter is my mother,
and Kaśyapa my father –
I can easily support the weight
of the three worlds.

11 My strength is such no creatures
can repulse it.
I performed heroically in the war
against the Daitya anti-gods.

12 I killed the following sons of Diti:
Śrutaśrī, Śrutasena,
Vivasvat, Rocanāmukha, Prasṛta
and Kālakākṣa.

13 I perch on the flagstaff
of your younger brother Viṣṇu
and serve him.
Is that why you mistreat me?

14 But who else can take such a burden?
Who else is stronger?
Despite my strength, I choose to serve Viṣṇu
and his followers.

15 But you have insulted me by denying me
my subsistence, O Vāsava-Indra,
as your brother Viṣṇu has done
by making me subservient.

16 You are the most powerful
of all the powerful and illustrious sons
born in the race
of Aditi.

17 Yet I can easily, without tiring, carry you
on a section of my wings.
*Tāta*! Child,
think – who is stronger?"

18 *Cakra*-wielding Viṣṇu
heard the boastful speech
of the furious sky-roaming bird,
and taunted him further with these words:

19 "You are a weakling, Garutman-Garuda;
you think you are strong.
Egg-born bird, what makes you so arrogant
in my presence?

20 I bear my own weight,
and I bear your weight too.
The three worlds united
could not bear my weight.

21 Give me proof! Here's my right arm.
Lift it if you can.
After you have done so,
I will believe your words."

22 Bhagavān Viṣṇu placed his arm
on Garuḍa's shoulder.
The weight knocked Garuda senseless
on the ground.

23 A single arm of mighty Viṣṇu
had the weight
of the entire earth
with its load of mountains.

24 Acyuta-Viṣṇu did not want
to take the life of Garuḍa,
so he did not with force
press down his arm.

25 Crushed under the burden,
the sky-wanderer panted;
his feathers flaked off, and he seemed
to lose consciousness.

26 Vinatā's bird-son *praṇama-ed* Viṣṇu
and, still in a semi-conscious state,
said regretfully and feebly
to him:

27 "*Bhagavān*! Small wonder that I should be pressed
and humbled
by an arm which belongs
to a world-energising body!

28 Deva! Divine one! Forgive me, I am helpless,
I was drunk
with grandiose self-importance,
I am only your flagstaff bird.

29 Deva, radiant lord, I was not aware
of your strength; I presumed to think
that my power was unequalled
in the world."

30 Bhagavān Viṣṇu was pleased
with Garutman-Garuḍa's words;
he said affectionately,
"Never express such proud feelings again."

31 O Indra-among-rājās! With a flick of his toe
he flung Sumukha on Garuḍa's chest;
Garuḍa has since then
befriended that snake.

32 O rājā! This was how the impressive power
of Viṣṇu
cured Vinatā's son, mahā-famous Garuḍa,
of his pride.

33 Son of Gāndhārī (added Kaṇva),
you will survive
so long as you do not confront
the sons of Pāṇḍu.

34 Is there anyone in the world
whom Vāyu's son mahā-powerful Bhīma
and Indra's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna cannot kill
on the battlefield?

35 Viṣṇu, Vāyu, Dharma, Śakra-Indra,
and the twin Aśvins –
they are all gods. How can you presume
to challenge them?

36 To fight is futile;
struggle, therefore, for peace, O king.
With Vāsudeva-Krishna's help,
save your race from destruction.

37 Nārada, who practises mahā-tapasyā,
is a witness
to *cakra*-and-mace-wielding Krishna,
who is glorious Viṣṇu himself.

38 Duryodhana listened to all this (said Vaiśampāyana)
He sighed deeply,
narrowed his eyes, glanced at Rādheya-Karṇa,
and laughed loudly.

39 He slapped his elephant-strong thighs.
The ill-minded one
ignored the words of ṛṣi Kaṇva,
and said:

40 "God has made me too, mahā-ṛṣi.
What will be, will be.
I will act as I must.
You protest too much."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIX

1 “Inclined to mischief from birth,
motivated by greed for others’ wealth,
given to ignobility,
seeking his own ruin,

2 Bringing misery to relatives
and pain to his friends,
harming his well-wishers
and enhancing his enemies’ joy,

3 Why was he not prevented from wrong-doing
by his friends
or by an affectionate bhagavān pitāmaha?”
asked Janamejaya.

4 Indeed, bhagavān Bhīṣma tried his utmost
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and so did Nārada, attempting to dissuade him.
Listen to what Nārada said:

5 Very few listen to the advice of well-wishers;
well-wishers too are very few.
If there’s a well-wisher,
there’s no listener.

6 The advice of your friends
is worth listening to.
O delighter of the Kauravas,
avoid the great defect of being obstinate.

7 There is an old story about this –
about the obstinacy of Gālava who,
because of it,
was ruined.

8 Long ago, to test the tapasyā of Viśvāmitra,
Dharma came to him,
disguised as the bhagavān ṛṣi
Vāsiṣṭha.

9 Disguised as one of the seven ṛṣis,
he came to the āshram
of the Kuśika’s son,
pretending he was hungry.

10 Viśvāmitra respectfully boiled some rice
with milk-and-honey.
His preoccupation with cooking
made him neglect other formalities.

11 After the guest had already eaten food
offered by other tapasyā-practising inmates,
Viśvāmitra brought his fresh,
hot preparation.

12 "I have finished eating," said Bhagavān Dharma,
and walked away, O rājā,
leaving the mahā-radiant ṛṣi Viśvāmitra
standing there, forlorn.

13 Out of bhakti, Viśvāmitra,
a ṛṣi of the strictest vows,
placed the food on his head and waited,
like a pillar, feeding on air.

14 A *muni* named Gālava,
moved by love and reverence,
attended on Viśvāmitra,
making every effort to please him.

15 After a hundred years,
Dharma returned to the āshram
of Kuśika's son Viśvāmitra,
again disguised as the famished Vasiṣṭha.

16 He saw the wise mahā-ṛṣi Viśvāmitra
standing there,
subsisting on air, still holding the food
on his head.

17 Munī Dharma accepted the hot,
freshly-cooked food
and said, "I am satisfied",
and went away.

18 Dharma's words immediately cancelled
the Kṣatriyahood of Viśvāmitra
and transformed him
into a delighted Brahmin.

19 Pleased with the supreme bhakti
of his disciple,
the man-of-tapasyā Gālava,
Viśvāmitra said to him:

20 "My son, you have my permission to go
wherever you wish."
Gālava, finest of *munis,* listened,
and replied,

21 In sweet words that enraptured
the mahā-radiant Viśvāmitra:
"What *dakṣiṇā*-tribute should I bring
for my guru?

22 O respectworthy one!
Karma fructifies only after *dakṣiṇā* is given.
The *dakṣiṇā*-giver is the person
who finds fulfilment.

23 *Dakṣiṇā* earns karma-fruit in heaven,
it brings peace.
Command me, bhagavān;
what shall I bring for my guru?"

24 Bhagavān Viśvāmitra,
knowing that the ministrations of Galava
were sufficient, said, "Go! Go!"
and dismissed him.

25 But Galava kept standing there,
though Viśvāmitra repeated "Go! Go!"
All he said in reply was:
"What shall I give you?"

26 Upset by the obstinancy
of the man-of-tapasyā Gālava,
Viśvāmitra, in a burst of sudden anger,
said:

27 "Get me eight hundred horses
white as moonlight,
each with one black ear.
Go, Gālava, hurry!"

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVEN

1 This command of wise Viśvāmitra
(continued Nārada)
was such that Gālava could neither sit,
sleep, nor eat.

2 He was reduced to skin-and-bones.
His worries
made him pale, moody and nervous.
O Suyodhana-Duryodhana!
So deep was his frustration
that he began lamenting:

3 "Where will I find rich friends?
Where find wealth? What are my savings?
Where can I get eight hundred
moon-white horses?

4 How can I even enjoy my food?
Where's the desire to enjoy?
My life is wasted.
Why live any more?

5 I will go to some secluded corner,
on the other side of the ocean,
and commit suicide.
Why go on living?

6 What happiness can there be
for a poor, disappointed,
comfortless, debt-ridden man
doomed to go on working?

7 Better death than live like one
who enjoys the wealth of friends,
hoping to reciprocate
but unable to do so.

8 The man who promises, 'I will',
but cannot keep his word, lies;
his *iṣṭa* and *ārpūta* merits
are ruined.

9 The man of falsehood has no substance.
He cannot procreate children;
he has no power.
How can he find ultimate bliss?

10 Is an ungrateful man ever honoured?
Where can he hide?
No *śraddhā*-respect for the ungrateful man,
no hope for him.

11 Wealthless is lifeless. Poor wretch,
he cannot even support his relatives.
He is doomed, for he cannot reciprocate
the favours he gets.

12 I am such an unfortunate person –
ungrateful, wealthless, useless.
I cannot fulfil the orders
of my helpful guru.

13 I will give up life
after doing something
that has never been done.
I have never supplicated the gods.
All the thirty gods respect me for this
at *yajña*-rites.

14 I will approach Tribhuvaneśvara-Viṣṇu,
the lord of the three worlds,
and Viṣṇu-Krishna,
who is the refuge of refuge-seekers,

15 And the source of the pleasures
of gods and anti-gods.
I seek the darshan of the undecaying yogī
Krishna!"

16 Even as he said this, his *sakhā*-friend
Garuḍa, the son of Vinatā,
flew towards him
in order to help him, saying:

17 "You are my friend,
and a friend of my friends.
A prosperous friend
should assist all his friends.

18 My power, O twice-born one,
proceeds from Viṣṇu,
the younger brother of Indra;
he has permitted me to help you.

19 I will transport you
wherever you wish to go,
to countries overseas and inaccessible places.
Let's hurry, Gālava."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHT

1 Garuḍa said: "The god-of-unknown-yoni Viṣṇu
has instructed me.
Tell me where you wish me to take you,
O Gālava.

2 Tell me which direction it shall be,
O finest of the twice-born, O Gālava –
east or south,
west or north?

3 Shall I take you where
the all-worlds-illumining sun first rises,
where Sādhyas practise
*saṁdhyā* meditations,

4 Where first appeared the intelligence
that pervades this earth,
where Dharma's two eyes
guide the universe,

5 Where sacrificial ghee was first offered,
which now flows freely in all directions?
This is the gate of eastern day,
O twice-born one.

6 Here, in the past, the daughters of Dakṣa
gave birth to their progeny,
this is the place
of Kaśyapa's progeny.

7 This is the source of the prosperity
of the gods,
where Śakra-Indra became rājā,
where gods practise tapasyā.

8 This is the east called *pūrva* or 'first',
because it was here,
first, that the gods established their sway,
O Brahmin.

9 This was the earliest inhabited place.
It was in the east
where the gods performed
their happiness-bringing deeds.

10 The Vedas were chanted here first
by the lord-of-the-worlds Brahmā;
it was here
that the goddess Sāvitrī
offered the Gāyatrī-mantra
to the Brahma-knowers.

11 This is where Sūrya gave the Yajur-veda,
O incomparable twice-born,
where sanctified soma-juice was drunk
by the gods.

12 This is where the *yajña*-fires
were propitiated by ghee
and other liquids, where Varuṇa founded
his Pātāla-realm

13 This is where, O bull-brave Brahmin,
the ṛṣi Vāsiṣṭha,
in the distant past, was born,
became famous, and died.

14 This is where Auṁ was first intoned,
with its hundred ramifications.
Here smoke-inhaling *munis*
inhaled *yajña*-smoke.

15 This is where Śakra-Indra slaughtered boars
and other beasts
to be used in offerings of *yajña*
to the gods.

16 There is where the rising sun is born,
where he deprives
wicked and ungrateful humans and anti-gods
of life.

17 This is the gate of the three worlds,
of heaven and happiness.
This is the east.
Enter if you wish.

18 I will do whatever is agreeable to Viṣṇu,
whose command I obey.
Shall we go to the east
or try another quarter?"

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINE

1 "This is the south, *dakṣiṇa*,"
"so called because, in a *śrauta-yajña*,
it was given as *dakṣiṇā* by Vivasvat-Sūrya
to his guru Kaśyapa.

2 In this quarter live the *pitṛs*
of the three worlds;
this is the abode, they say,
of the *uṣmapa* vapour-subsisting gods.

3 This is where the Viśvadeva gods dwell
along with the *pitṛs*;
they receive equal pūjā
with the *pitṛs*.

4 This is the second gate, O twice-born one.
The lord of death
from here calculates human life-spans
in *truṭis* and *lavas*.

5 This is where, untouched by grief,
the god-ṛṣis,
the ṛṣis of the *pitṛ*-world,
and the rāja-ṛṣis dwell.

6 Dharma, truth and karma bear fruit here,
O finest of the twice-born;
the dead and their karma
find their dwelling here.

7 O excellent Brahmin, all must end up
in this quarter;
but their dark ignorance
blocks their happiness here.

8 Here are thousands of malignant rākṣasas
who are seen, O bull-brave Brahmin,
only by persons who have perverted
their ātmans.

9 Here, in the groves of Mandara hill
and in the homes of ṛṣis,
gandharvas sing
mind-and-heart-ravishing songs.

10 This is where Raivata heard
the Sāmaveda chants
and, renouncing wife, friends, and kingdom,
retired to the forest.

11 This is where Sāvarṇi Manu
and the son of Yavakrita
drew a boundary whose limits
Sūrya cannot cross.

12 This is where the rākṣasa rājā Rāvaṇa,
Pulastya's mahātmā son,
practised tapasyā and sought immortality
from the gods.

13 This is where Vṛtra's offensive habits
provoked Śakra-Indra;
this is where creatures come and deconstruct
into the five elements.

14 This is where men of wicked karma cannot enter,
O Gālava;
this is where the crime-cleansing river
Vaitaraṇī flows.

15 This is where people come
seeking to end their miseries,
and where the day-making sun
brings sweet-water clouds.

16 Reaching this quarter of Vāsiṣṭha,
the sun showers dew.
This is where I, long ago,
stood thirsty, O Galava,

17 And saw a massive elephant
and a giant tortoise
locked in combat.
Here came the sun-born ṛṣi Cakradhanu,

18 Who later became Kapila-deva
who persecuted the sons of Sagara.
Here the Veda-learned Śiva Brahmins
prosper.

19 They concentrate on the Vedas,
and obtain everlasting mokṣa.
Here is Bhogavatī city,
ruled by Vāsukī,

20 And by the Nāga Takṣaka,
and Airāvata.
Here the dead people encounter
mahā-darkness,

21 Impenetrable even by the sun,
or by any fire.
If this is your selected quarter,
Gālava, tell me.
Or let me now describe to you
the western quarter."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TEN

1 "This quarter is presided
by the lord-of-cows Varuṇa,"
said Garuda. "It is the birthplace
of the ocean-rājā.

2 It is called *paścima* or the west,
because it is here
that the sun *paścāt*, finally, sets,
O excellent Brahmin.

3 The divine ṛṣi Kāśyapa
anointed Varuṇa
as the ruler of water-creatures
and guardian of the oceans.

4 Drinking the six rasas of Varuṇa,
the darkness-destroying moon
renews itself
in the beginning of the bright fortnight.

5 This is where the wind-god Vāyu
routed and imprisoned the Daityas;
grievously wounded,
they lost consciousness here.

6 Here is the mountain called Asta
which lovingly
accepts the setting sun
and causes dreamy *saṁdhyā*-twilight.

7 Darkness and sleep emerge from here
at night
and spread out to steal half the lives
of living creatures.

8 It was here that Indra
cut the foetus
of the pregnant sleeping devī Diti,
and the Maruts were born.

9 It is here that the Himavant rises
to eternal Mandara,
whose limits cannot be reached
even in a thousand years.

10 This is where Surabhi gives her milk,
on the shore of the sea
near golden mountains
with golden lotuses.

11 In this ocean one can see the sun-like,
headless body of Rāhu-Svarbhānu,
always eager to swallow
sun and moon.

12 This is where one can hear
the sacred chants of invisible,
immeasurably powerful
yellow-haired Suvarṇaśiras.

13 This is where Dhvajavatī,
daughter of Harimedhas,
was transfixed to the sky when the sun said:
'Stay there! Stay there!'

14 This is where wind, fire, water, and earth
surrender
their pain-producing powers,
during day and night.

15 From here the sun deviates
from its straight course,
and the planetary bodies
enter the sun's maṇḍala.

16 After journeying for twenty-eight nights
with the sun,
they emerge from solar influence
and enter the lunar.

17 In this quarter are the sources of rivers
that make oceans;
in this region of Varuṇa are the waters
of the three worlds.

18 This quarter is the abode of Ananta,
rājā of Pannaga-serpents;
this is the abode of incomparable,
startless-and-endless Viṣṇu.

19 This is the abode of wind,
the friend of fire;
this is the abode of Marīca's son,
mahā-ṛṣi Kaśyapa.

20 I have described to you, O excellent Brahmin,
the western quarter;
tell me, Gālava,
which is the quarter of your choice?"

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED ELEVEN

1 "Because it gives *uttāraṇa* or exaltation,"
said Garuḍa,
"this crime-absolving quarter
is called *uttara*, the north.

2 Because it stretches across the east
and the west,
the north is sometimes described
as the central region.

3 This region is the finest, O bull-brave Brahmin.
No one who is not serene,
whose ātman is not controlled, who has adharma,
can be found here.

4 Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu-Krishna,
and finest-of-men Narottama live here
in the āshram of Badari;
so does eternal Brahmā.

5 On the slopes of Himavant
lives fire-radiant Maheśvara-Śiva,
like Purusa with Prakṛti,
as dazzling as yuga-end fires.

6 He is invisible to *munis*,
to the gods led by Vāsava-Indra,
to gandharvas and yakṣas,
to all except Nara-Nārāyaṇa.

7 Here lives undeteriorating Viṣṇu,
thousand-eyed, thousand footed,
thousand-headed, the one whom māyā sees
as the dazzling many.

8 This is where the moon rules
over the twice-born,
where Mahādeva-Śiva released
the heaven-plunging Gaṅgā,

9 And gave her to the world of men.
O Gālava! You who know Brahmā,
this is where Umā practised tapasyā
to obtain Maheśvara-Śiva.

10 This is where Kāma was born,
and Śiva's anger lit up the mountains.
Here, O Gālava,
over rākṣasas, yakṣas, gandharvas,

11 Dhanada-Kubera was anointed king in Kailāsa.
Here is Caitraratha,
and the āshram of the ṛṣis
known as Vaikhānasas.

12 Here is Mandākinī-river
and the Mandara-mountain,
and the Nairṛta-protected forest
of Saugandhika.

13 Here are grassy plains, plantain groves,
celestial greenery;
here the self-controlled
and at-will-travelling Siddhas.

14 Have their heavenly kāma-*bhoga*-filled abodes,
Gālava.
Here live the seven ṛṣis,
and also Arundhatī-devī.

15 This is the place of the Svātī constellation,
where it is first visible.
Pitāmaha Brahmā lives here
near Yajña.

16 The sun and moon and all shining bodies
revolve here;
this is the mahā-mouth of the Gaṅgā,
guarded by

17 Mahātmā, truth-speaking *munis*
known as the Dhāmas –
none knows their shape
or the nature of their tapasyā.

18 They live at will a thousand years,
and pleasurably.
The man who crosses beyond the regions
described

19 Simply dematerialises, O bull-brave Brahmin.
No one has ever crossed
beyond these limits,
O best of the twice-born,

20 Except the god Nārāyaṇa and deathless Nara,
also known as Jiṣṇu.
This is the Kailāsa region
of Kubera.

21 The ten lightning-lovely apsarās
were born here;
and Viṣṇupada was created here by Viṣṇu
as he roamed

22 In the three worlds, and passed through
the north region.
This is where rājā Marutta performed
his *yajña* –

23 In Uśirabīja, which is situated
near lake Jāmbunāda.
This is where the twice-born ṛṣi,
mahātmā Jimūta,

24 Saw the sacred mines of pure gold
in Himavant.
All that wealth was donated
to the assembly of Brahmins,

25 To be named after him;
that wealth, therefore, is *jaimūta*.
Here, the twice-born quarter-protectors,
morning and evening,

26 Loudly proclaim: 'Who comes here?'
'On what business?'
That is why this quarter excels all others,
O best of the twice-born.

27 It is called Uttara for that reason.
It is the best for all rituals for all karma.
*Tāta*, my friend,
I have described the quarters –

28 All four of them, one by one.
I can take you, O excellent Brahmin,
to them and to the whole world.
Climb on me, O Brahmin."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWELVE

1 Gālava said: "Garuḍa, snake-hater,
lovely-plumaged one,
take me to the east,
which Dharma's two eyes survey.

2 Let us go to the eastern quarter
you described first,
where, according to you,
all the gods were present.

3 That is the region of dharma
and truth.
I am eager to make acquaintance
with the gods.
I want to meet them and see them
with my own eyes."

4 Vinatā's son said to the Brahmin:
"Climb on me."
The muni Gālava immediately got up
on Garuḍa's back.

5 Gālava said:
"You are lovely, snake-eater,
as you fly in the sky,
soaring like the sun,
like the thousand-rayed sun!

[V:112:6-14]

Transcreated by P. Lal

6 Sky-wanderer,
I see the course of your journey
in the trees uprooted
by the flapping of your wings.

7 Sky-traveller, you shine,
you drag the earth itself
with the swing of your wings,
the sea-and forest-and-mountain-and-grove-bounded
earth.

8 The fish-and-snake-and-crocodile-filled waters
swoosh up to the sky
in the commotion caused
by the swing of your wings.

9 I see the faces of the *timis* and *timiṅgala* whales,
elephant-faced, horse-faced, and human-faced whales,
crushed by the swing of your wings.

10 I hear the roaring of the mahā-ocean,
I am deafened.
I cannot see, I cannot hear,
I do not know what this journey is for.

11 Fly slowly, sky-wanderer.
The life of a Brahmin is at stake.
The sun and the quarters and the sky
fade from my sight

12 And darkness overcasts me.
I cannot see your body,
O egg-born one.
But your eyes shine like jewels in the dark.

13 I cannot see your body,
I cannot see mine.
But I see sparks crackle from your wings.

14 Extinguish this fire!
Dim the dazzle of your eyes!
Slow down your mahā-speed,
O son of Vinatā!

15 O snake-devourer,
I have no wish to travel.
Return, O mahā-fortune-favoured one;
your speed overwhelms me.

16 I promised my guru eight hundred horses,
each white as the moon,
each with one black ear.

17 O egg-born one,
I do not know how to keep my promise
The only recourse I have
is to commit suicide.

18 I have no wealth.
I have no friend who is wealthy.
Even vast wealth will not fulfil my promise."

19 The son of Vinatā laughed
and still flying (continued Nārada),
said to the despondent
and lamenting Gālava:

20 "Not a very wise thought, O Brahmin ṛṣi!
Commit suicide?
Kāla cannot be willed,
Kāla is the supreme divinity Parameśvara.

21 Why did you not tell me this earlier?
There is indeed
a mahā-convenient way
of fulfilling your promise.

22 On the edge of the ocean
is the mountain Ṛṣabha;
let us rest here briefly, eat,
and then return, Gālava."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTEEN

1 Alighting on Ṛṣabha peak
(continued Nārada),
the two met a Brāhmiṇī named Śāṇḍilī,
a lady of tapasyā.

2 In this quarter live the *pitṛs*
of the three worlds;
this is the abode, they say,
of the *uṣmapa* vapour-subsisting gods.

3 Suparṇa-Garuḍa honoured her,
and Gālava offered his pūjā-respect;
she welcomed them,
and offered them a place to sit.

4 Before long, Garuḍa woke,
Hoping to leave,
the sky-wanderer discovered
that his wings were missing.

5 The sight of the sky-ranger,
now no more than a helpless lump
of beak and claws,
moved Gālava to sympathy:

6 "What has gone wrong now?
Look at your condition
as a result of coming here.
How long will this last?

7 Were you thinking of going against dharma
that this happened?
This must be due to impure motivation
on your part."

8 Lovely-plumaged Suparṇ a-Garuḍ a replied:
"Indeed, I wanted
to take this lady of tapasyā
from here to Prajāpati,

9 To the god Mahadeva-Śiva,
to eternal Viṣṇu,
to Dharma and Yajña,
in the hope that she would live there.

10 I now bow before the gracious lady
and beg of her:
'I did have this thought,
and I have been punished;

11 But I was acting out of respect.
Whether I did right or wrong,
forgive me –
be magnanimous."

12 The lady was pleased with the bird
and the bull-brave Brahmin,
and replied: "Do not fear,
your lovely wings are restored.

13 My son! You insulted me,
and I do not forgive insult.
The miscreant who insults me
is flung out of this world.

14 I have nothing inauspicious in me.
Being blameless,
I have, through nobility of character,
achieved fulfilment.

15 Dharma's fruit is character;
character produces wealth;
character promotes prosperity;
character removes all inauspiciousness.

16 Long-lived lord of birds,
go where you like.
But never blame a woman
even if you know she is blameworthy.

17 Your strength and speed
will be restored to you."
Instantly Garuḍa's wings re-sprouted,
stronger than before.

18 Dismissed by Śāṇḍilī,
he flew away
where he had planned,
but nowhere saw the required horses.

19 Finest of eloquent speakers Visvāmitra
happened to meet Gālava;
and he said to Gālava,
in the presence of Vinatā's son Garuḍa:

20 "Give me the horses
that you promised me.
The time has come.
But you may do as you like –

21 I have waited long enough, Brahmin,
so I can wait a little more.
But find out a way
to succeed."

22 Garuḍa said to the disconsolate Gālava:
"O finest of the twice-born Gālava!
Viśvāmitra, in my presence,
has repeated his earlier words.

23 Come, twice-born one,
let us discuss and devise a plan.
You cannot relax unless you give your guru
the horses."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FOURTEEN

1 The most excellent of birds Garuḍa
(continued Nārada)
said to sad Gālava:
"Bred by fire and fanned by wind,
wealth is called Hiraṇya,
from *hiri,* 'golden-yellow'?

2 Wealth is Dhana the supporter,
because it sustains the earth.
Wealth has always existed
for this purpose.

3 When either the eastern or northern constellation
is ascendant on Śukra,
Agni fabricates wealth
for Kubera's treasury.

4 Guarding the wealth are the gods
called Ajaikapāds
and Ahirbhudnyas, and Kuhera himself.
O bull-brave Brahmin,

That is the reason
wealth is so hard to obtain.
Without wealth, however,
you cannot get your horses.

5 That being so, you should request
a raja born to rāja-ṛṣis
to help us,
but without exploiting his subjects.

7 He is the rāja-ṛṣi Yayāti,
son of Nahuṣa,
who will surely give what you need
if I recommend you.

8 He is as mahā-wealthy as Dhanapati-Kubera.
O learned one,
take his gift and treat it
as guru-wealth."

9 They were still discussing this plan
and wondering on the best course of action
when they arrived
at Yayāti's palace.

10 The king welcomed them
with the customary *arghya*-water,
and enquired about their visit.
Garuḍa explained:

11 "Son of Nahuṣa, this is my friend Gālava,
an ocean of tapasyā,
Viśvāmitra's disciple for thousands of years.
O king,

12 Asked by Viśvāmitra to leave,
out of gratitude, he asked Viśvāmitra:
'Bhagavan,
what is your guru-*dakṣiṇā*?'

13 Knowing him to be poor,
Viśvāmitra kept silent;
but he insisted, and was told:
'Go, get me this –

14 Eight hundred horses
of the finest pedigree,
each as pure-white as the moon,
each with one ear black.

15 Let this be your gift to your guru,
O Gālava.'
Rich-in-tapasyā Viśvāmitra,
incensed, said this.

16 That is why this bull-brave Brahmin
is despondent.
He cannot keep his promise.
He seeks your assistance.

17 Your assistance, O tiger-among-men,
will remove his sorrow;
pleasing his guru,
he will resume his mahā-tapasyā.

18 You will receive the rewards
of a portion of that tapasyā:
he will enrich you,
O rāja-ṛṣi.

19 Earth-ruling lord of men!
You will obtain as many worlds
as there are hairs on the bodies
of the gifted horses.

20 He deserves gift-receiving,
you are a worthy gift-giver.
Your gift will be like milk
poured in a conch-shell."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTEEN

1 The excellent words of Suparṇ a-Garuḍa
made the rājā
consider them carefully;
repeatedly reflecting on them,

2 The lord of a thousand sacrifices,
the lord of gifts,
Yayāti, the ruler of all Kāśī,
said these words,

3 Looking straight at his friend Tārkṣya-Garuḍa
and bull-brave tapasyā-practising Brahmin Gālava
convinced that the gift given
would be a noble example,

4 Specially since they had ignored
all other kings
of the solar dynasty
and come to him for help:

5 "Today my birth has borne fruit!
My dynasty is redeemed!
You, faultless Tārkṣya-Garuḍa,
have freed my land.

6 I must tell you, however,
dear *sakhā*-friend,
I am not the rich man than I used to be;
I am much less wealthy.

7 I do not want to make your coming here
a failure;
I do not want to frustrate
the Brahmin's expectations.

8 I will give something
that will serve his purpose.
A suppliant turned away
can destroy one's entire race.

9 If a man says 'Help me'
and receives 'I have nothing' in reply,
– what crime can be greater, O Vinatā's son,
than such conduct?

10 The suppliant whose expectations
are denied or frustrated
destroys the sons and grandsons
of the man who refuses.

11 Here is my daughter,
who will mother four great races;
she looks like a god's daughter,
she promotes dharma.

12 Gods, humans, and anti-gods
have desired her for her beauty.
I offer her to you,
O Gālava.

13 I am certain kings will offer
entire kingdoms to you
as her dowry, let alone eight hundred
black-eared horses.

14 Accept my daughter Mādhavī, *prabhu*-lord!
The only favour I ask
is that I be given a grandson
by her."

15 Gālava accepted the girl,
and Garuḍa said to the king:
"We will see you soon."
Saying this, they left with her.

16 Reassuring, "You can now get your horses",
the egg-born one,
with Gālava's permission,
flew away to his abode.

17 After the bird-rājā had gone,
Gālava wondered
which rājā would offer the best dowry
for her.

18 He decided on the Ikṣvāku Haryaśva,
rājā of Ayodhyā,
a mahā-valiant king,
lord of a four-fold army.

19 Wealth, coins, and luxurious artifacts
were this king's;
he cherished his subjects, was friendly to Brahmins;
he was strong in tapasyā.

20 The Brahmin Gālava approached Haryaśva,
and said: "O Indra-among rājās!
This race-dignity-enhancing girl
whom I have here

21 Will be mother of illustrious children,
O Haryaśva!
Take her, after offering me the dowry
that I deserve."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTEEN

1 Rājā Haryaśva, finest of kings,
pondered this,
and, sighing deeply at the thought
of a son, said:

2 "This girl has the six desirable swellings,
the five desirable slender and smooth areas,
the three deep,
the five pink.

3 Her two posteriors, two thighs,
and two breasts are rounded;
her head hair, body hair, fingers, nails, and skin
are slender and smooth;

4 Her voice, navel, and personality are deep,
and her palms, soles of her feet,
left eye-rim and right eye-rim and nails
are pink.

5 Gods, anti-gods, humans, gandharvas
desire her darshan;
she has all the auspicious signs
of would-be motherhood.

6 I am worthy of fathering on her
a son who will be emperor.
Remember my estate,
and specify her dowry."

7 Gālava said: "Eight hundred horses,
moon-white, handsome,
born in this land,
each with one black ear.

8 Then will this lovely girl become your wife,
and be the large-eyed mother
of your children,
as the fire-stick is mother of fire."

9 Rājā Haryaśva, the rāja-ṛṣi (continued Nārada),
was so kāma-filled
that these words made him say sadly
to Gālāva:

10 "I have only two hundred horses
of that kind.
I have hundreds of others
roaming in my kingdom.

11 What can I do?
O Gālava, let me at least
father one son on this girl.
Grant me this."

12 The girl said to Gālava: "Bhagavan,
I have been granted a boon
by a devotee
of Brahmā

13 To the effect that I will regain my virginity
after each birth.
Accept the rājā's horses;
grant his desire.

14 If you approach four kings,
you will obtain
eight hundred horses –
and I will have four sons.

15 Bestow me on him, O finest of the twice-born,
and honour the promise to your guru,
Do as you wish
with my humble suggestion."

16 The words of the girl compelled
*muni* Gālava
to say to king Haryaśva,
the lord of the earth:

17 "O finest-among-men Haryaśva,
accept this girl from me
for a fourth of her dowry,
and have one child by her."

18 Haryaśva gladly accepted the girl
and, as advised by Gālava,
had the desired son
at the proper time and place.

19 The prince was called Vasumanas,
and he became
as wealthy as a Vasu
and a great charity-bestower

20 In course of time, intelligent Gālava
appeared again
before Haryaśva
and said to the gratified king:

21 "You now have a sun-radiant son,
O finest of kings.
Time for me now to go to another king
for my purpose."

22 Haryaśva, a man of his word,
one who stood on dignity,
unable to find more horses,
returned Mādhavī.

23 Mādhavī left the Śrī-favoured
prosperous king
and, with her virginity restored,
followed Gālava.

24 "For the time being
I shall keep the horses with you,"
said Gālava, and took the girl
to king Divodāsa.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEEN

1 "The king of Kāṣī," said Gālava,
  "Bhīmasena's descendant, is Divodāsa,
a man of mahā-power,
  skill and prowess.

2 Gracious lady, I will visit this lord of men.
  Follow me, trust me.
He is a man of dharma,
  given to truth."

3 The king welcomed Gālava courteously
  (continued Nārada)
and Gālava advised the king
  to beget children.

4 "I know all about it, O Brahmin,"
  replied king Divodāsa.
"No need to repeat.
  I have the same thought in mind.

5 I also realise that you flatter me
  by ignoring
other great rulers
  and coming straight to me.

6 About the horses – let me explain, Gālava,
  that my wealth
is no greater than his.
  One son is all I want."

7 The excellent Brahmin said, "Very well,"
  and bestowed the girl
on the rājā,
  who accepted her ceremonially.

8 The royal ṛṣi made love to her,
  like Ravi to Prabhāvatī,
Agni to Svāhā,
  Vāsava-Indra to Śacī,

9 Candra to Roh.ṇī, Yama to Dhūmorṇā,
Varuṇa to Gaurī, Kubera to Ṛddhi,

10 Nārāyaṇa to Lakṣmī, Udadhi to Jāhnavī,
Rudra to Rudrāṇī, Pitāmaha to Vedī,

11 Vasiṣṭha's son to Adṛśyantī, Vasiṣṭha to Akṣmālā,
Cyavana to Sukanyā, Pulastya to Saṁdhyā,

12 Agastya to the Vidarbha princess, Satyavān to Sāvitrī,
Bhṛgu to Pulomā, Kaśyapa to Aditi,

13 Ṛcika's son to Reṇukā, Kuśika's son to Haimavatī,
Bṛhaspati to Tārā, Śukra to Śataparva,

14 Bhūmipati to Bhūmi, Pururavas to Urvaśī,
Ṛcika to Satyavatī, Manu to Sarasvatī,

15 Duṣyanta to Śakuntalā, eternal Dharma to Dhṛti,
Nala to Damayantī, Nārada to Satyavatī,

16 Jaratkāru to Jaratkāru, Pulastya to Pratīcyā,
Urṇāyu to Menakā, Tumburu to Rambhā,

17 Vāsuki to Śataśīrṣā, Dhanañjaya to Kumārī,
Rāma to the Videha princess, Janārdana to Rukmiṇī.

18 Mādhavī gave birth to a son
named Pratardana,
from her happy union
with the earth ruler Divodāsa.

19 Bhagavān Gālava came in due time
to Divodāsa.
The Brahmin Gālava
said to king Divodāsa:

20 "Return the girl to me.
I have the horses
in your safe-keeping.
I must go now for additional dowry."

21 Dharmātmā Divodāsa, as was agreed,
returned the girl to Gālava:
he was a lord of the earth
firm in truth.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEEN

1 Leaving the affluent king,
Mādhavī regained her virginity
and, keeping her word,
accompanied the Brahmin Gālava.

2 Gālava, fanatically determined,
after much pondering,
went to the son of Uśīnara,
the king of Bhoja.

3 He approached that king of truth and prowess,
and said:
"This girl will bear you
two world-subjugating sons.

4 By fathering
these sun-and-moon-radiant sons,
you will achieve
your this-life-and-after-death desires.

5 O you who know all the dharmas,
her dowry
is four hundred moon-white horses,
each with one ear black.

6 I seek this not for myself,
but for my guru.
If you agree, mahārāja,
act upon it promptly.

7 O rāja-ṛṣi, you are childless.
Father two sons who, like rafts,
will ferry you and your ancestors
to liberation.

8 O rāja-ṛṣi, a man who enjoys
the fruit of a son
never falls from heaven,
never goes to the horrible sonless hell."

9 The lord-of-men Uśīnara
listened very carefully
to the words of the Brahmin Gālava,
and replied:

10 “I have heard you; I understand, O Gālava.
Brahmin,
I would gladly do as you say,
fate is all-powerful.

11 I have only two hundred horses
of your breed.
There are hundreds of others, however,
in my kingdom.

12 I will father only one son by her,
O Gālava;
I will follow the example
set by others.

13 O most excellent of the twice-born,
my wealth
is for my subjects, not for me.
I will offer the same dowry.

14 Dharmātmā Brahmin,
the rājā whose kāma
makes him squander his people’s treasury
gets neither dharma nor fame.

15 I accept the girl on these conditions.
I will father a son on her,
whose womb bears
god-like sons.”

16 The best-of-the-twice-born Gālava
offered his pūjā-respect
and bestowed the girl
on the sweet-speaking king.

17 After giving her to Uśīnara,
Gālava went to the forest.
Uśīnara enjoyed her
as if she were Śrī herself,

18 In mountain caves,
near the mouths of rivers,
near casements of elegant mansions,
and in inner apartments,

19 In exquisitely variegated gardens,
in forests and pleasure groves,
in lovely palaces,
and on house terraces.

20 A sun-radiant son was born
from this pleasure-making.
He became renowned
as the great ruler called Śibi.

21 O rājā! Galava the twice-born appeared
before Uśīnara in course of time,
and took the girl
to Vinatā's son Garuḍa.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETEEN

1 Vinatā's son Garuḍa saw Gālava,
laughed and said:
"Twice-born one, how good to see you
successful so soon!"

2 Gālava was pleased by the words
of Vinatā's son,
and remarked that a quarter
was still uncompleted.

3 Lovely-feathered Garuḍa,
most eloquent of speakers, said:
"No matter how hard you try,
you will not succeed.

4 A long time ago,
the ṛṣi Ṛcīka wanted to marry Satyavatī,
the daughter of Gādhi.
King Gādhi of Kānyakubja said:

5 Bhagavan, revered one,
I want a thousand moon-white horses,
each with one black ear."
These were his exact words, Gālava.

6 Ṛcīka agreed and,
hurrying to the realm of Varuṇa
and obtaining the horses from the horse-*tīrtha*,
gave them to Gādhi.

7 Rājā Gādhi performed the Puṇḍarīka-sacrifice
and gifted the horses to Brahmins,
from whom three kings bought
two hundred each.

8 O excellent twice-born Gālava,
the remaining four hundred horses
were swept away in the Vitastā river
while being ferried across.

9 How can you obtain what does not exist,
Gālava?
Offer this girl in place
of the two hundred

10 To Viśvāmitra, O dharmatma,
along with the six hundred you have.
This should remove
your great grief."

11 Gālava replied, "I will do so."
He, Suparṇa-Garuḍa, and the girl,
taking the horses,
went to Viśvāmitra.

12 Gālava said: "Here are six hundred
of the horses you wanted.
Accept this girl in lieu
of two hundred more.

13 Rājā-ṛṣis have fathered
three sons of great dharma on her.
You should father
an all-excelling fourth.

14 That will complete my promise
of giving you
eight hundred horses,
and I will recommence tapasyā."

15 Viśvāmitra looked at Gālavā;
then he looked at the bird,
at the lovely-hipped girl,
and said:

16 "What made you not give this girl
to me earlier, Gālavā?
I could have fathered
four dynasty-establishing sons.

17 Very well, I accept this girl
to father one son.
Free the horses and let them roam
in my āshram."

18 From Viśvāmitra's love-making with Mādhavī
was born
a mahā-radial-son
who was given the name of Aṣṭaka.

19 At the instant of his birth
the mahā-*muni* Viśvāmitra
instructed him in dharma-and-artha
and gave him the horses.

20 Aṣṭaka went to the city that resembled
the moon-city.
Kauṣika-Viśvāmitra returned the girl
and went to the forest.

21 Gālava was happy – as was Garuḍa –
that he had kept
his promise of the *dakṣiṇā*.
He said to the girl:

22 "One of your sons is a great wealth-giver,
one a hero,
one devoted to truth and dharma,
one liberal in yajñas.

23 Slim-waisted lady,
you have freed your father,
the four rājās – and me too,
O lovely-thighed beauty."

24 Gālava allowed snake-subsisting Garuḍa
to fly away;
returning the girl to her father,
he retired to the forest.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY

1 Rājā Yayāti, eager to marry off
Mādhavī in a svayamvara,
drove to an āshram
on the Gaṅgā-Yamunā confluence

2 In a chariot in which Mādhavī sat
wearing garlands of flowers.
Pūru and Yadu accompanied
their sister.

3 Nāgas, yakṣas, humans, gandharvas,
animals, birds,
and hill and forest dwellers
were known to come there.

4 Many kings were present there.
Indeed, the whole forest
arround the āshram was filled
with Brahmā-like ṛṣis.

5 The smooth-skinned girl,
instructed to choose a husband,
rejected all the kings present
and chose the forest.

6 She got down from the chariot,
did namaskāra to her relatives and friends,
and in the forest,
practised tapasyā

7 Through strict fasts, sacred rituals
and other vows.
She emaciated herself,
living like a forest-deer.

8 Eating luscious, green, fibrous vegetables
that looked like lapis lazuli sprouts,
and tasted simultaneously
bitter and sweet,

9 Drinking only the pure waters
of sacred fountains,
waters that were cool, sweet,
and crystal-clear,

10 Wandering in dense forests populated
by the king of beasts
and by tigers;
passing through fire-free barren tracts,

11 She continued to practise brahmacarya;
living with forest deer,
she collected for herself
the finest merits of dharma.

12 Yayāti, following the noble life-style
of previous kings,
lived a thousand years before succumbing
to Kāla-dharma.

13 The two excellent men Pūru and Yadu
continued
the family line of Yāyati
in this world and the next.

14 Lord-of-the-earth Yayāti lived in heaven
like a veritable mahā-ṛṣi;
he enjoyed all the pleasures
that heaven could offer.

15 Thousands of years passed.
Once, it so happened
that, sitting happily,
surrounded by famed rāja-ṛṣis,

16 Yayāti, filled with foolish conceit,
lost his head
and insulted the gods, ṛṣis,
and humans present.

17 Śakra-Indra, slayer of the anti-god Bāla,
saw Yayāti behaving foolishly;
he and other rāja-ṛṣis said:
"*Dhik*! Shame on him!"

18 They saw Nahuṣa's son Yayāti
and asked each other:
*Who is he? Which rājā's son?*
*How did he attain heaven?*

19 *What karma got him such perfection?*
*In which forest*
*did he practise tapasyā?*
*Do any heaven-dwellers know him?*

20 All these inquiries were carried out
by the dwellers of heaven in secret;
they sprang
from rājā Yayāti's misconduct.

21 Hundreds of heaven's charioteers
and gate-keepers
and other authorities were questioned.
All said: "We don't know."

22 It seemed that their knowledge
was somehow obscured,
preventing recognition.
In no time Yayāti lost his lustre.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-ONE

1 Cast out of heaven
and his prestige in heaven,
his heart trembling,
his mind burning in grief's fire,

2 His garlands faded,
his intelligence gone,
deprived of his crown and ornaments,
his body limp with lassitude,

3 Unrecognised by everybody,
the gods blurring in front of his eyes,
Yayāti, in helpless despair,
plummeted on earth.

4 The rājā wondered: *What heinous crime*
*against dharma have I committed*
*that I should have been cast out*
*of my place in heaven?*

5 The rājās and Siddhas and others in heaven,
including apsarās,
laughed at disconsolate
and supportless Yayāti.

6 Instructed by the rājā-of-the-gods Indra,
the casting-out officers of heaven,
possessors of enormous sanctity,
said to Yayāti:

7 "In your mad pride
you mocked everyone in heaven;
your pride renders you unfit
for residence in heaven.

8 No one recognises you in heaven.
You must fall."
Nahuṣa's son Yayāti repeated thrice:
"Let me fall among good men."

9 As he fell, that finest of men
began reflecting
on where he, who was once perfected,
should fall.

10 Four kings flashed through his mind;
he fell among these kings –
Pratardana, Vasumanas,
Śibi, Aṣṭaka –

11 While they were pleasing
the lord of heaven
by the Vājapeyi-yajña,
whose smoke ascended to heaven's doors.

12 Yayāti plummeted inside that river of smoke
connecting heaven and earth,
like celestial Gaṅgā.
He stood facing his own relatives
who were performing
the *yajña* –

13 Like the four earth-supporting Loka-pālas
were these rulers of the world,
as radiant as the *yajña*-fire.
Yayāti fell among them.

14 The lion-like rulers shone like the radiant fires
of their *yajñas*.
The merit-exhausted rāja-ṛṣi Yayāti
fell among them.

15 The rulers of the earth
asked the refulgent Yayāti:
"Who are you? Which town and country
are you from?

16 Are you a yakṣa, a god, a gandharva,
or a rākṣasa?
You do not look human.
What do you want from us?"

17 "I am the rāja-ṛṣi Yayāti,
expelled from heaven
because my merits are exhausted.
I willed good fall, so I am here."

18 The rājās said: "May you achieve your desires,
O bull-brave hero!
May the dharma of the *yajñas*
become yours."

19 Yayāti said: "I am not a Brahmin,
I am a Kṣatriya.
I cannot accept wealth.
Nor do I wish to take others' merits."

20 It so happened these rājās (Nārada continued)
chanced to see Mādhavī
roaming like a deer;
they asked her:

21 "What do you wish, lady of rich tapasyā?
Command us –
we are your sons,
we will carry out your orders."

22 Mādhavī was greatly pleased
by their concern.
She approached her father Yayāti
and bowed to him.

23 She touched the heads of her sons and said:
"Father, O Indra-among-rājās,
these are my sons, your grandsons –
we are related.

24 They will redeem you.
There are such examples of redemption.
I am Mādhavī, your daughter,
now living like a deer.

25 I have acquired enormous dharma.
Take half of that, O rājā,
for parents benefit from the goodness
of their children.

26 That is why you wanted me to be mother
of daughter-sons."
All the great rulers of the earth
bowed their heads to the lady.

27 They namaskāra-ed their maternal grandfather
and repeated Mādhavī's words,
whose sweetness
has no parallel.

28 In this way those kings redeemed
their cast-out-from-heaven grandfather.
And Gālava returned,
and said to him:
"Take an eighth of my tapasyā
and ascend to heaven."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-TWO

1 As soon as he was recognised
by these bull-brave heroes,
Yayāti left the earth
and ascended to heaven;
he was freed of material burdens,
and gained heaven.

2 He seemed to be walking on air,
with his celestial garlands,
dress, perfumes,
and his pristine character.

3 Vasumanas, renowned as the world's
most generous giver,
addressing him in a loud voice,
proclaimed then:

4 "I offer you the sanctity
that I have earned
by my unblameable attitude
towards the castes in my kingdom.

5 I offer you the fruits of a man
who is generous and forgiving
and devoted
to *yajña*-performance."

6 The bull-brave Kṣatriya, Pratardana,
skilled in war
but always devoted to the principles
of dharma, said:

7 "I offer you the glory I have gained
as a Kṣatriya,
and the merit that accrues
from being a celebrated hero."

8 The son of Uśīnara, wise Śibi,
said mellifluently:
"To children, to women,
to people who are frivolous,

9 To the endangered, to the gamblers,
to the calamity-stricken,
O rājā, I have never lied.
That truth is your heaven.

10 I will surrender kāma, kingdom,
comforts, *praṇa*-life itself –
but not truth.
That truth is your heaven.

11 The truth by which I have pleased Dharma
and Pāvaka-Agni
and Śatakratu-Indra of a thousand sacrifices –
that truth is your heaven."

12 The dharma-knowing rāja-ṛṣi Aṣṭaka,
Mādhavī's son by Kuśika's son,
addressed the many-*yajña*-performing son
of Nahuṣa; Yayāti:

13 "*Prabhu*-lord, I have performed hundreds
of *puṇḍarīka*, *gosava,* and *vājapeya* rituals.
I offer you
their pious fruits.

14 I have not stinted on gems
and other wealth
in my sacrifices.
Let that truth be your heaven."

15 As, one by one, the grandsons spoke
to the earth-ruler,
rājā-Yayāti left earth and ascended to heaven
correspondingly.

16 In this way all the rājās
with their good deeds
redeemed Yayāti,
who had been expelled from heaven.

17 The four grandsons
of four different royal dynasties,
by the strength of the dharma
obtained from *yajña* and charity,
re-established their mahā-wise maternal grandfather
in heaven.

18 The rājās said: "O rājā!
We are your grandsons
we practise rāja-dharma and all other dharmas.
Ascend to heaven, earth-lord!"

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE

1 Ascending heaven with the help
of those *dakṣiṇā*-giving rulers,
Yayāti took leave of his grandsons
(continued Nārada)

2 Amid a sudden shower
of sweetly-scented flowers,
blown by the breeze,
with fragrance unmistakably celestial.

3 And he radiated with great glory
in the eternal regions
obtained with the fruit
of his grandsons' karma.

4 The gandharvas and apsarās
sang and danced
as they welcomed him to heaven
with cymbals and *dundubhi*-drums.

5 The rāja-ṛṣis, deva-ṛṣis,
and Cāraṇas
honoured him with *arghya*
and other offerings.

6 Brahmā Pitāmaha, seeming to please him
who had regained heaven's fruits
and serenity of mind,
said to him:

7 "All four aspects of dharma were earned
by your karma,
and you would have enjoyed heaven
eternally,

8 But you cancelled your sanctity
by your pride, O rāja-ṛṣi,
which blurred the memories
of the heaven-dwellers.

9 Because they could not recognise you,
you fell from heaven.
The love of your grandsons
has restored you to heaven.

10 Your karma has brought you finally
to a condition
that is holy, supreme, stable, eternal,
and indestructible."

11 Yayāti said: "O Grandfather of the universe!
I have a problem
that none but you, O Bhagavan,
can clarify.

12 For thousands of years I cherished
and protected my subjects,
and my *yajñas* bore
mahā fruit.

13 Bhagavan! How is it possible for all that
to be cancelled so swiftly?
O Mahā-Radiant One,
how could all the eternal realms
I possessed
be so quickly denied?"

14 Brahmā Pitāmāha replied:
"The fruits of your thousands of years
of gifts and *yajñas*
and caring for your subjects

15 Were nullified by your pride
which made you insult the heaven-dwellers.
This defect led to your fall,
O Indra-among-rājās.

16 O rāja-ṛṣi! The realm of heaven
is not eternal
for whoever is proud, brutal, violent, deceitful,
or māyā-manipulating.

17 You, though a rājā, have no right
to insult anyone
superior, inferior, or equal,
Pride cannot bring tranquillity.

18 Those who discuss the story
of your fall and restoration
will, though imperfect, be ferried over.
This is assured."

19 Nārada concluded: Such were the hardships
faced by Yayāti who was proud,
and by Gālava,
who was obstinate.

20 Listen to the advice of your friends
who wish you well.
Obstinacy can only be the road
to certain ruin.

21 Son of Gāndhārī, forsake pride and anger.
Discarding your resentment,
make peace
with the sons of Pāṇḍu.

22 Follow what your true friends say.
Do not espouse hollow advisers,
or the powerful Pāṇḍavas
will destroy you.

23 O lord of the earth,
one's goodness and *yajñas*
and tapasyā can never
be ruined; they never
decline; one enjoys
the fruits of one's goodness.

24 Who cherish the truths
of this excellent story
approved by the wise
know dharma and artha
and kamā, and master
the visible world.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FOUR

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"All that you say is right, Nārada,
*Bhagavān,* revered one, I agree with you,
but I am not my own master."

2 The Kuru elder then said to Krishna;
"You have discoursed, Keśava-Krishna,
on what leads to heaven,
and what is dharma and justice.

3 But I do not have the power,
Janārdana-Krishna.
Influence ill-ātmaned Duryodhana
and dissuade him from acting foolishly.
My son is bent on flouting
the words of the śāstras, Krishna.

4 O mighty-armed Puruṣottama-Krishna,
mahā-muscled finest of mortals!
Duryodhana simply refuses
any good advice whatsoever.

5 Gāndhārī's son rejects Vidura's wisdom
and that of Bhīṣma;
he pays no attention, Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna,
to well-meaning friends.

6 I leave it to you to convince
the ill-minded, cruel,
gross-ātmaned and foolish king –
my son Duryodhana.

7 If you agree, you will have done me
a great favour, Janārdana-Krishna."
Vārṣṇeya-Krishna said
to irascible Duryodhana

8 The following agreeable words
filled with dharma-and-artha:
"Duryodhana, finest of Kurus,
listen to what I say

9 For your welfare and your followers' welfare.
You are born, O Bharata,
in a mahā-wise family,
you should behave with dignity.

10 You are learned,
you possess all the valued *guṇas.*
Only those born in immoral, ill-ātmaned,
shameless families

11 Will behave as you have planned.
My friend! *Tāta*!
Honest people will always prefer
to follow dharma-and-artha.

12 Dishonest people will do the opposite,
O bull-brave Bharata!
Your course of action
seems to be the opposite.

13 Your obstinacy is pugnacious, frightening,
and shows adharma;
it is irrational, ruinous,
and untypical of your character.

14 Forsake what is against artha;
follow a course of action
that will be of benefit to your brothers,
followers, and friends.

15 In that way you will avoid the blame
of karma that violates dharma.
The wise, brave, pure-ātmaned,
learned-in-*śruti*

16 Pāṇḍavas – make peace with them,
O bull-brave Bharata.
This will please Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and be for his benefit,

17 As well as your grandfather Bhīṣma,
mahā-minded Vidura
and Droṇa, Kṛpa and Somadatta,
and wise Bāhlīka,

18 Aśvatthāman, Vikarṇa, Sañjaya, Viviṁśati.
It will benefit
all your cousins and friends enormously,
O foe-chastiser.

19 Peace will mean your welfare and the world's.
My friend! *Tāta*!
So be humble, learned, and humane,
uphold family dignity.
O bull-brave Bharata, *tāta,*
listen to your father and your mother.

20 People say that a father's advice
is generally good;
a good man, in difficulty, remembers
his father's advice.

21 *Tāta*! My friend! Peace with the Pāṇḍavas
will please your father.
O excellent Kuru, it should please you too –
and your friends.

22 The man who hears the advice
of his friends but rejects it
is doomed,
like the swallower of a *kimpāka*-fruit.

23 The indecisive man, who sits on helpful advice,
wavers, fails to achieve his goal,
and is forever stricken
with deep regret.

24 Contrariwise, the man who quickly acts
on the basis of good advice,
without thinking twice,
finds happiness.

25 The suspicious man who rejects the advice
of a well-wisher
and accepts its opposite,
is soon ruled by his enemies.

26 Friends can only commiserate
with the man
who rejects the advice of the good
and emulates the wicked.

27 The man who forsakes his chief advisers
and follows
the words of the ill-born,
is imperilled by his decision.

28 The earth abandons the man who listens
to dishonest advice, O Bharata,
who behaves hypocritically, rejects friends,
and welcomes flatterers.

29 You find the brave Pāṇḍavas arrayed
against you, O bull-brave Bharata,
and seek support among strangers, swindlers,
and inefficient fools.

30 Is there any other man in the world
who would abandon
Śakra-Indra-like mahā-chariot-heroes,
and run to others?

31 You victimised the sons of Kuntī
from the day of their birth –
but the dharmātmā Pāṇḍavas
are not revengeful.

32 *Tāta,* my friend, you have wronged them
from their birth,
but the renowned Pāṇḍavas
have been charitable to you.

33 O bull-brave Bharata,
you should treat them
as they have treated you.
Do not be angry with your relatives.

34 If the wise are unable to pursue
the threefold path
of dharma-artha-kama,
they should choose dharma-artha.

35 If pursued separately – a wise man
will choose dharma,
an average man artha,
an immature man kāma.

36 The wicked man, sensual and greedy,
rejects dharma
and pursues kāma-and-artha,
an immature man pursues kāma.

37 The practice of dharma is essential
before kāma-and-artha are desired.
Kāma-and-artha are not separable
from dharma.

38 Dharma is indeed the three-fold path.
O lord of the earth!
As fire prospers on dry grass,
the dharma-practiser prospers on dharma.

39 *Tāta*! My bull-brave Bharata friend!
You are determined to use unethical means
to gain this large territory
ruled by rājās.

40 O rājā! Like an axe slicing a tree,
the deceitful man
cuts himself when he tries to harm
any good person.

41 There is no point harming a person
who is uninvolved.
But the bewildered fool acts indiscriminately.
The person who controls his ātman
considers nothing in the three worlds
as negligible –

42 Not even the meanest creature –
and certainly not
the bull-brave Pāṇḍavas.
Anger blinds a man totally.

43 He is entangled in his own weeds.
*Tāta*! My friend! O Bharata, consider:
peace with the Pāṇḍavas is better
than alliance with swindlers.

44 Peace with them will mean that you,
O excellent rājā, can safely enjoy
all the pleasures available in the lands
they have subjugated.

45 You spurn the Pāṇḍavas
and seek assistance instead
from Duḥśāsana, Durviṣaha, Karṇa,
and Subala's son Śakuni.

46 O Bharata! You think that they can lead you
to unchallenged supremacy,
but they lack knowledge
of the required dharma-and-artha.

47 In strength and skill they cannot match
the sons of Pāṇḍu, O Bharata.
These rājās who are your allies
are not capable even

48 Of facing anger-inflamed Bhīma
on the field of battle.
The massive armies of the earth
that you have marshalled,

49 Including the forces of Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
Karṇa, Kṛpa,
Somadatta's son Bhūriśravas, Aśvatthāman,
and Jayadratha,

50 Are no match for Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's might.
The gods and antigods,
human beings and gandharvas
together
cannot defeat Arjuna in battle.
Avoid war at all costs.

51 Do you know of any man
in your entire army
who has dared face Arjuna
and returned home safe?

52 How will a gory massacre help you,
O bull-brave Bharata?
Where is the man who can defeat him
whose defeat is your victory?

53 Who will fight that son of Pāṇḍu
who routed gods, anti-gods,
gandharvas, yakṣas, and Pannaga-serpents
in Khāṇḍavaprastha?

54 I have heard unbelievable stories of how,
in the city of Virāṭa,
one routed many.
Consider the facts.

55 Are you really bent on fighting
the invincible, unfading, brave Arjuna
who, angered,
was a match for Mahādeva-Śiva?

56 How can you hope to defeat Pārtha-Arjuna
knowing that,
when he enters the field like Puraṁdara-Indra,
I will help him?

57 The man who defeats Arjuna in battle
will lift the earth,
consume all creatures,
and dispossess even the gods.

58 Think of your sons, brothers, relatives,
and others.
O excellent Bharata,
your decision can destroy them all.

59 Do not allow the Kauravas
to be wiped out, O king,
and you become notorious
as the destroyer of your race.

60 The Pāṇḍava mahā-chariot-heroes are agreeable
to appointing you heir-apparent
and your father Dhṛtarāṣṭra
as the mahārāja.

61 *Tāta*! My friend! Do not let this good fortune
pass you by.
Relinquish half to Pāṇḍu's sons
and achieve prosperity.

62 Amazing good fortune will be yours
and your friends'
once you have made peace
with the friendly Pāṇḍavas."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE

1 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
after hearing Keśava-Krishna's advice,
said to excitable Duryodhana:

2 "Krishna speaks like a friend who seeks peace.
My child, *tāta*,
listen to him,
and give up hate and pride.

3 If you refuse to act on the advice
of mahātmā-Keśava Krishna,
you will lose all chance of happiness
and prosperity.

4 Mahā-muscled Keśava-Krishna has spoken
of dharma-and-artha.
My child, *tātā*, do as he says.
Do not be guilty of mass slaughter, O rājā.

5 Do not let your perverted ātman
destroy the accumulated glory
of all the Bharata rājās
during Dhṛtarāṣṭra's lifetime.

6 You, your friends, your sons, brothers, followers,
will die because of your wilful, proud obstinacy.

7 O excellent Bharata! By rejecting advice
that promises prosperity –
the advice given by Keśava-Krishna,
your father, and wise Vidura –

8 You will achieve your race's extinction.
Abandon this wicked course
that leads to an ocean of grief
for your parents."

9 Droṇa said to Duryodhana,
who seemed to be suppressing his wrath,
for he kept sighing heavily
again and again:

10 "*Tāta*! My child! Keśava-Krishna's words
contain dharma-and-artha.
So do Bhīṣma's.
O lord of men, put them into practice.

11 They are both large-minded, wise, and self-controlled,
they know artha-and-kāma.
Their advice is good.
Accept their words, O lord of men.

12 Cherish the words of Krishna and Bhīṣma,
O mahā-wise one;
reject your crookedly-learned advisers,
O foe-chastiser.
Do not ever, in your delusion,
insult Mādhava-Krishna.

13 Those who lead you on now will desert you
when the hour of battle comes
and leave the fighting
to others.

14 Do not become responsible for the massacre
of your subjects, your brothers and sons.
Arjuna and Vāsudeva-Krishna form
an invincible pair.

15 *Tāta*, my child! Accept the advice
of your friends Krishna and Bhīṣma.
O Bharata! If you refuse, you will bitterly repent
when the time comes.

16 Arjuna is stronger even than described
by Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma.
Devakī's son Krishna has defeated gods.
O bull-brave Bharata,
what more can I say
conducive to your welfare?

17 All this you know already.
You are free to choose.
I have nothing more to say,
O excellent Bharata."

18 When Droṇa finished, Kṣattā-Vidura looked
at Duryodhana, (continued Vaiśampāyana),
who was shaking with anger,
and said to him:

19 "I do not feel sorry for you, Duryodhana.
I feel sorry, O bull-brave Bharata,
for two very old people –
your father and Gāndhārī.

20 With a wicked-hearted son as guide,
they will wander forlorn,
their friends and courtiers dead,
like wingless birds.

21 They will wander like distressed beggars,
repenting that they procreated
a callous son who exterminated
their whole race."

22 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra said to Duryodhana,
who was sitting
with his brothers, surrounded by all
the assembled rājās:

23 "Duryodhana, pay attention to the advice
of mahātmā Śauri-Krishna.
His words are honest, beneficial,
and conducive to yoga.

24 With the help of Krishna
of spotless karma,
we will be rājās who attain
all that we desire.

25 *Tāta*! My son! Go with Keśava-Krishna
and meet Yudhiṣṭhira;
prepare for a conference that will lead
to Bharata posperity.

26 Take Vāsudeva-Krishna's help
and work out a satisfactory peace.
Now is the time. Do not disobey me now,
Duryodhana.

27 If you reject Keśava-Krishna's plan for peace,
intended for your own good,
how can you ever hope
to prosper?"

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX

1 The words of Dhṛtarāṣṭra stirred Bhīṣma and Droṇa
to sympathy;
they said
to elder-advice-spurning Duryodhana:

2 "Till the two Krishnas put on armour,
till the Gāṇḍīva-bow is used,
till at least Dhaumya lights
the foe-vanquishing sacred fire,

3 Till the mighty but generous-minded
bowman Yudhiṣṭhira
glances belligerently at your army,
let peace prevail.

4 Till Pṛthā-Kuntī's mahā-bowman son
Bhīma assumes
his battle station in his army,
let peace prevail.

5 Till Bhīma, brandishing his mace,
charges furiously
at the ranks of his enemies,
let peace prevail with the Pāṇḍavas.

6 Till such time as Bhīma
decapitates heroes on elephants,
and topples heads
like tree fruit

7 In the flush of the ripening season,
let peace prevail.
Till Nakula and Sahadeva
and Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna

8 And Virāṭa and Śikhaṇḍin
  and the son of Śiśupāla, Dhṛṣṭaketu,
in full armour, infiltrate your army
  like crocodiles the mahā-ocean,

9 Shooting arrows with masterful ease,
  let peace prevail.
Till the young bodies of warriors
  are pierced

10 By sharp-winged arrows, let peace prevail.
  Till the breasts of soldiers
smeared with *aguru* sandaplaste
  and decorated with gems and garlands –

11 Till these are shredded in battle
  by steel weapons
shot expertly over long distances,
  let peace prevail.

12 Let dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, the elephant-rājā,
  extend his hand to you
while you respectfully stand before him
  with bowed head.

13 Let large-*dakṣiṇā*-granting Yudhiṣṭhira
  affectionately place, on your shoulders,
his banner-and-hook-marked right arm,
  O bull-brave Bharata.

14 Let him, while you are sitting,
  caress your back
with the gem-glittering fingers
  of his light-pink palm.

15 Let *śāla*-tree-shouldered,
  wolf-waisted, mahā-muscled
Vṛkodara-Bhīma embrace you
  and welcome you
for the sake of peace,
  O bull-brave Bharata.

16 And when the three –
  Arjuna and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva –
greet you, may you smell theirs heads
  and talk peace, O earth-lord.

17 Let all these great earth-rulers
weep tears of joy
at seeing you peacefully reconciled
with your heroic cousin-brothers.

18 And announce the reconciliation
in all the world's capitals!
Enjoy, with your brothers, without obstacles,
the world's sovereignty."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVEN

1 Duryodhana heard these displeasing words
in the Kuru-assembly,
and in reply he said to mahā-muscled
illustrious Vāsudeva-Krishna:

2 "You should have spoken to me
after deeper reflection, Keśava-Krishna.
You have singled me out
for all your fault-finding.

3 Slayer of Madhu, why such words of bhakti
for Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons –
and always against me – without even noting
my strength and weakness?

4 You, Vidura, the rājā, ācārya Droṇa,
and grandfather Pitāmaha Bhīṣma
always pick on me,
and on no other earth-ruler.

5 I don't think I am specially to blame,
yet I see that all of you,
including the rājā,
hate me.

6 I have passed myself
through an exhaustive, unbiased examination,
O foe-chastising Keśava-Krishna,
and I do not find myself guilty.

7 Madhusūdana-Krishna, the Pāṇḍavas freely gambled,
and they lost their kingdom
to Śakuni.
What wrong have I done?

8 In fact, Madhusūdana-Krishna,
I ordered at the time
that the Pāṇḍavas' wealth
be returned to them.

9 Is it my fault, O most victorious of victors,
that Pṛthā-Kuntī's invincible sons
insisted on another dice-game, which also they lost,
and were again exiled?

10 Krishna, how have they decided
that we are at fault?
They are weak, and find pleasure
in petty condemnation.

11 What wrong have we really done
that Pāṇḍu's sons, helped by the Sṛñjayas,
seek the deaths
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons?

12 Deed-brutality and word-ferocity are not going
to coerce us into submission.
Even Śatakratu-Indra
of a hundred sacrifices cannot.

13 I can think of no espouser of Kṣatriya-dharma,
O foe-annihilating Krishna,
who has the power to defeat us
on the battlefield.

14 Even the gods cannot harm
Karṇa and Kṛpa.
Tell me, Madhusūdana-Krishna,
how can the Pāṇḍavas defeat them?

15 If I follow my sva-dharma, Mādhava-Krishna,
and die on the battlefield,
slain by a warrior's weapons,
I will instantly achieve heaven.

16 The chief dharma of a Kṣatriya,
O Janārdana-Krishna,
is to lie on a bed of arrows
on the battlefield.

17 So, how can it be injurious to our welfare,
Mādhava-Krishna,
if we decide to die like heroes
instead of surrendering?

18 Is there any noble Kṣatriya who declares
his dharma to be capitulation
when threatened
by the least danger?

19 Manliness is never to give up,
to struggle till the very end.
Collapse
rather than bow to anyone.

20 Those who have self-respect
abide by Mātaṅga's words –
'I *praṇāma* only Brahmins,
and only for the sake of dharma.'

21 I have always followed the dharma
of a Kṣatriya,
which is never to give in
and always to keep struggling.

22 Keśava-Krishna! The share of the kingdom
they once received from my father
will never, in my lifetime,
revert to the Pāṇḍavas.

23 So long as Dhṛtarāṣṭra remains rājā,
we will discard our weapons
and live peaceably,
if possible, Janārdana-Krishna.
I was a dependant when the kingdom
was divided, Mādhava-Krishna,

24 Perhaps from ignorance,
perhaps out of weakness.
The Pāṇḍavas will not be allowed
to recover it now, Janārdana-Krishna.

25 So long as my muscular arms
wield any authority, Keśava,
I will not let the Pāṇḍavas
have so much land, Keśava,
as can be covered by the point
of a sharp needle."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHT

1 Dāśārha-Krishna pondered this statement,
his eyes flaming with anger;
then (continued Vaiśampāyana) he said to Duryodhana
in the Kuru-assembly:

2 "You are eager for a hero's bed.
You will have it.
You and your friends have only to wait
for the mahā-massacre.

3 Fool! You think you have not been guilty
of any misconduct
with the Pāṇḍavas.
O rājās! Listen and judge –

4 You were jealous of the mahātmā
Pāṇḍava brothers, O Bharata,
and conspired with Saubala-Śakuni
to manipulate a dice-game.

5 Why else, *tāta*, my friend, would the unsuspecting,
honest and intelligent Pāṇḍavas
agree to participate with him
in the devious dice-game?

6 O maha-wise one, gambling is known
to steal the honest man's intelligence,
and produce dissensions
and misunderstandings.

7 You and your scheming followers planned
this heinous disaster
through gambling; you never consulted
men of character.

8 Who but you would have molested the wife
of your brothers
the way you did after dragging Draupadī
into the sabhā?

9 She is noble-born, a lady of patience,
honoured by them
like *prāṇa*-life itself. You dared degrade
the Pāṇḍavas' queen!

10 The Kauravas saw how Duḥśāsana mocked
the foe-crushing Pāṇḍavas publicly
in the sabhā as they were preparing
to go into exile.

11 What kind of a man is this
who reviles his kinsmen,
specially those honoured for dharma,
goodness, and unselfishness?

12 You, Karṇa and Duḥśāsana expressed
your feelings then
in words that suit only ruthless
and un-āryan cultureless men.

13 You tried your best to kill the Pāṇḍavas
and their mother
by arson when they were in Vāraṇāvata –
but you failed.

14 The Pāṇḍavas for a long time
disguised themselves
and hid with their mother
with an Ekacakra Brahmin.

15 Poison, snake, rope –
you tried every means
to assassinate the sons of Pāṇḍu –
but you failed.

16 You have always treated
the sons of Pāṇḍu perfidiously –
and yet you assert you have not harmed
those mahātmās!

17 If you refuse to grant them
their paternal share,
they will take it after divesting you
of your glory.

18 In spite of your repeated acts
of humiliation,
cruelty and wickedness,
you pretend to be otherwise!

19 Your mother and father,
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Vidura
urge you to make a peaceful settlement.
You are adamant.

20 O rājā! Peace will bring you profit;
peace will benefit Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons also.
But your miniscule intelligence
cannot comprehend this.

21 You cannot possibly succeed
by ignoring your well-wishers, O rājā.
What you plan to do smells of adharma
and infamy."

22 Dāśārha-Krishna said this to Duryodhara.
Duḥśāsana interrupted him
and loudly addressed himself to Duryodhana
in the Kaurava assembly:

23 "If you refuse peace terms
with the sons of Pāṇḍu,
the Kauravas will tie you and hand you over
to Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

24 O bull-brave hero! Your father,
Bhīṣma, and Droṇa will turn us over –
Vaikartana-Karṇa, you, and me –
to the sons of Pāṇḍu."

25 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Suyodhana-Duryodhana
heard this from his brother,
and was infuriated.
He rose, sighing like a maha-snake.

26 Vidura, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, mahārāja Bāhlīka, Kṛpa,
Somadatta, Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Janārdana-Krishna–

27 Brushing them all aside,
the shameless, ill-minded, proud,
disrespected, direspectful-to-the-respectworthy
Duryodhana stalked out.

28 Seeing the bull-brave hero march out,
his brothers also walked out,
followed by the whole assembly
of courtiers and rājās.

29 The exit of agitated Duryodhana
and his brothers
from the sabhā made Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma
exclaim:

30 "Ill-wishers find enormous amusement
in the spectacle
of an angry man ruined
by his rejection of dharma-and-artha.

31 The ill-minded son of rājā-Dhṛtarāṣṭra
is confused over means and ends,
and filled with pride,
anger and greed.

32 Janārdana-Krishna! The time has come
for the doom of the Kṣatriyas,
because the kings and courtiers
have foolishly followed his example."

33 The valiant lotus-eyed Dāśārha hero Krishna
heard Bhīṣma's comment,
and said to all the followers
of Bhīṣma and Droṇa:

34 "The great failing of Kaurava elders
is that they do not use force
to prevent
this proud and wicked king.

35 O chastisers of your foes!
It is time you took action.
O faultless men, listen
to these beneficial words of mine.

36 My suggestions are motivated
to seek your good.
If you find them agreeable, act on them,
O descendants of Bharata!

37 The son of the elderly rājā Ugrasena of Bhoja,
Kaṁsa,
was an ill-minded voluptuary.
He usurped the throne and then was killed.

38 I killed Ugrasena's son Kaṁsa and his kinsmen
in a fierce battle
for the good of my race.
His friends had deserted him.

39 Āhuka's son Ugrasena was honoured
and re-installed king;
he annexed the Bhoja territory
to his kingdom.

40 O Bharata! Forsaking one – Kaṁsa –
for the good of the many,
the Yādavas, Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis
found happiness.

41 Parameṣṭhin-Prajāpati-Brahmā thought
at the time
when the gods and anti-gods
were arming themselves for battle,

42 When the world split into two camps
and faced ruin, O Bharata –
the Creator and Bhagavān of all the worlds
thought:

43 *The Ādityas, Vasus, Rudras*
*and other heaven-dwellers*
*will defeat in battle*
*the Daityas, Dānavas, and anti-gods.*

44 *In their fanatic warfare,*
*the gods, anti-gods, humans,*
*gandharvas and rākṣasas*
*will indiscriminately slaughter each other.*

45 And so Parameṣṭhin-Prajāpati-Brahmā
said to Dharma:
'Tie the Daityas and Dānavas
and hand them over to Varuṇa.'

46 Dharma carried out the order
of the Creator Parameṣṭhin
and turned over the trussed Daityas and Dānavas
to Varuṇa.

47 Made captive by Dharma's power
and the noose of Varuṇa,
the lord of waters, the Dānavas are kept
securely in the ocean.

48 Neutralise Duryodhana, Karṇa,
and Saubala-Śakuni similarly,
and Duḥśāsana, and turn them over
to the Pāṇḍavas.

49 Sacrifice an individual for a family,
Sacrifice a family for a village,
Sacrifice a village for the world,
Sacrifice the world for the ātman.

50 O bull-brave Kṣatriya! Silence Duryodhana,
make peace with the Pāṇḍavas.
This will save the Kṣatriya race
from extinction."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-NINE

1 These words of Krishna
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
made lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra say hurriedly
to all-dharma-knowing Vidura:

2 "*Tāta*, dear brother, go to mahā-wise,
deep-inseeing Gāndhārī.
Bring her here. She and I will try
to influence ill-minded Duryodhana.

3 If she is able to persuade ill-thinking,
ill-ātmaned Duryodhana,
we might be able to implement
the peace-plan of Krishna.

4 Perhaps her words on peace
may lead her foolish son,
blinded by greed and misguidance,
to the right path.

5 If she is able to avert
the impending mahā-calamity
of Duryodhana's making,
lasting happiness may still be ours."

6 Vidura followed the rājā's instruction
and returned with Gāndhārī,
who was gifted
with inseeing foresight.

7 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Your ill-ātmaned son,
Gāndhārī, refuses to obey me.
Greed will destroy
his prosperity and his life.

8 He is so disrespectful and ill-ātmaned
that he walked out of the sabhā
with his friends,
ignoring all his well-wishers."

9 The daughter of a rājā, renowned Gāndhārī,
heard her husband Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and, wanting her son's welfare, said
(continued Vaiśampāyana):

10 "Summon your son here.
He lusts for royal power.
How can one without dharma-and-artha
rule a kingdom?

11 Yet far-from-humble Duryodhana already
has the near-unattainable.
Your fondness for him, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
is to blame for this.

12 You know his unrighteous inclinations,
yet you pamper him;
and he, propped by you,
indulges in kāma and greed.

13 O rājā! It is too late now for force:
he will not change.
Having left the kingdom
to that ill-ātmaned fool,

14 Who has crooked advisers
who play on his greed,
you are now reaping the fruits, Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
O earth-lord! Be firm now.
Your enemies are laughing
at this family break-up.

15 Mahārāja, if a crisis can be resolved
by conciliation or by gifts,
what is the point
of using force?"

16 Ordered by Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and requested by Gāndhārī,
Vidura went and returned
with the excitable Duryodhana.

17 His eyes copper-red with anger,
sighing long snake-sighs,
Duryodhana returned to the sabhā
to listen to his mother's words.

18 When her wrong-path-treading son entered,
Gāndhārī,
motivated by a desire for peace,
rebuked him:

19 "My dear son Duryodhana, listen to me.
I wish the good
of you and your followers,
I wish your happiness in the future.

20 Duryodhana, O best of the Bharatas,
accept what your father,
Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, and Vidura
have advised you.

21 You could not do me, your father,
Bhīṣma, and others headed by Droṇa
greater honour
than by agreeing to peace.

22 My mahā-wise son, O excellent Bharata,
you can neither rule a kingdom
by the strength of kāma,
nor win, cherish, and enjoy it.

23 An indisciplined man
cannot really enjoy a kingdom;
only the ātman-disciplined and intelligent
can protect a kingdom.

24 Kāma and anger are obstacles
to a man's prosperity.
First these two enemies; then does a rājā
conquer the earth.

25 An ill-ātmaned man can hope to gain
the massive authority of royalty,
but governing a kingdom
is another matter.

26 The greatness-seeker first trains his senses
on artha-and-dharma.
Self-discipline feeds intelligence,
as fuel feeds fire.

27 Undisciplined, the senses can destroy a person,
as ill-trained horses
run off with a driver
who is incompetent.

28 The man who, without governing his ātman,
tries to govern his ministers,
or the man who,
without governing his ministers,
tries to govern his enemies,
is soon subdued by others.

29 That man succeeds who considers first his ātman
as his enemy and governs it;
and then governs ministers
and enemies.

30 Prosperity always favours the man
who disciplines his senses,
contains his enemies,
wields the rod of justice
against criminals,
and acts after deep reflection.

[V:129:31-39]

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31 Kāma and anger are slippery fish
in the body net;
they can be permanently trapped
only by wisdom.

32 No matter how eligible a person may be
for heaven,
heaven's doors are shut
if he cherishes kama-and-anger.

33 A king who has successfully conquered
kama-and-anger,
greed, pride, and selfishness,
is fit for world-lordship.

34 Kings who are eager to obtain dharma and artha,
and wish to defeat their enemies,
should first
control their senses.

35 The king whose kāma and anger
make him deceive himself and others,
will soon find nobody
on his side.

36 *Tāta*! My son! Seek the friendship
of the mahā-wise, heroic, united,
foe-punishing Pāṇḍavas,
and enjoy this earth with them.

37 What Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma and Droṇa
have said
about the mahā-chariot-heroes Arjuna and Krishna
being invincible, is true.

38 Seek the protection of mahā-muscled,
effortlessly-exerting Krishna.
If Keśava-Krishna is pleased,
both sides will be happy.

39 Enemies are ecstatic over the man
who rejects the advice
of wise and noble
and learned friends.

40 *Tāta!* My son! How can war breed good?
It violates
dharma-and-artha,
so how can it lead to happiness?
Even victory is not permanent.
Do not contemplate war.

41 O my foe-crushing, my mahā-wise son,
fearing family rifts,
your father, Bhīṣma and Bāhtīka gave
the Pāṇḍavas their kingdom's share.

42 The fruits of that decision are yours –
you enjoy the earth
without obstacles, all the thorns
having been already removed.

43 Give the sons of Pāṇḍu their rightful half-share,
my foe-crushing son,
if you wish to continue enjoying the kingdom
with your ministers.

44 Surely half the world is enough
to sustain you and your ministers.
Follow your well-wishers and gain respect,
O Bharata.

45 A war with the prosperous Pāṇḍavas,
who are disciplined and intelligent,
can lead only to loss
of your happiness.

46 Pacify your angry well-wishers, O bull-brave Bharata,
and govern your kingdom
after returning to the sons of Pāṇḍu
their rightful share.

47 They have endured enough misery
for thirteen years.
O mahā-wise one,
curb your kāma-and-anger-fed feelings.

48 You are not worthy of possessing
the Pāṇḍavas' wealth,
nor are the charioteer's son Karṇa
and your anger-obsessed brother Duḥśāsana.

49 Antagonising anger-inflamed Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Kṛpa, Karṇa,
Bhima, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna and Dhṛṣṭadyumna
will lead only to the doom of your subjects.

50 *Tāta*! My son! Don't let your anger
spell Kaurava doom;
don't let this entire earth
be cruelly massacred.

51 Your hope that Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
and others will all fight on your side
is a hope
doomed to disappointment.

52 They know their ātmans
and have the same affection
for you and the Pāṇḍavas.
The Pāṇḍavas have the greater dharma.

53 They may out of fear of disloyalty
give their lives for you –
but they will never be able to face rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
without shame.

54 Greed does not bring prosperity to any person;
*tāta,* my son;
my bull-among-the-Bharatas' son,
curb your greed."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY

1 Duryodhana ignored the sensible advice
of his mother (continued Vaiśampāyana);
he rose, preferring the company
of the restless-ātmaned ones.

2 Striding out of the sabhā,
Kaurava Duryodhana went
to consult Subala's son, rājā Śākuni,
the expert at dice.

3 The decision arrived at by the four –
    Duryodhana, Karṇa,
Subala's son Śakuni, and Duḥśāsana –
    was as follows:

4 "Janārdana-Krishna is no waster of time.
    His purpose seems to be
to seize us with rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra's
    and Śāntanava-Bhīṣma's help.

5 But we will strike first and,
    like Indra seizing Virocana's son Bali,
pre-empt tiger-among-men
    Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna.

6 When the Pāṇḍavas learn
    of Vārṣṇeya-Krishna's capture,
they will become as depressed and helpless
    as fangless snakes.

7 Mahā-muscled Krishna
    is everyone's refuge and guardian.
When the boon-granting bull-brave Sātvata Krishna
    is made captive,

8 The sons of Pāṇḍu and the Somakas
    will be at our mercy.
Let us without any delay imprison
    quick-acting Keśava-Krishna

9 Despite the protests of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
    and proceed with the battle-plan."
The treacherous move
    of the wicked scoundrels

10 Was anticipated by wise Sātyaki.
    His inkling of it
made him go to Hṛdika's son
    Kṛtavarman;

11 He said to Kṛtavarman: "Hurry,
    get an armour-clad squad of soldiers,
and wait
    at the sabhā-gate,

12 While I take the message
to fluently-exerting Krishna."
He entered the sabhā
like a lion entering a cave,

13 And divulged his suspicion first
to mahātmā Keśava-Krishna,
then to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and, finally,
to Vidura.

14 He smiled and said:
"They are about to embark
on an act that violates dharma,
artha, and kāma.

15 The fools are trying
to do the impossible.
The scoundrels have devised
this most malignant plan.

16 Kāma and anger and greed
have overpowered them,
and they seek to treacherously kill
lotus-eyed Krishna

17 Even as children and madmen
try to extinguish fire
with scraps of cloth."
Sātyaki's words made far-seeing Vidura

18 Say to mahā-muscled Dhṛtarāṣṭra
in the Kaurava assembly:
"Kala is now ready to swallow your sons,
O foe-crushing rājā.

19 They are bent on doing what is impossible;
and, if possible, shameful.
Conspiring
against lotus-eyed Krishna,

20 The younger brother of Vāsava Indra,
they want to seize him,
who is an invincible, unchallengable
tiger-among-men.

21 They will perish like moths
in a blazing fire.
If Janārdana-Krishna wishes, he can,
in the midst of battle,

22 Angrily consign them to Yama's realm,
like a lion scattering an elephant herd.
But such a vile karma
is not ordained,

23 Because Puruṣottama-Krishna
never goes against dharma.
Once Acyuta-Krishna burned down Vārāṇasī
and the horses,
chariots, and elephants of Kāśī's king
and his followers;

24 So the conch-mace-and-*cakra*-wielder,
as lord Kāla,
will burn down Hastināpura
and all its Kauravas.

25 When the-joy-of-the-Yādavas Krishna
gained prominence,
furious Indra attempted to subjugate him,
but Vṛtra-slaying Indra failed.

26 The anti-god Mura devised
six thousand powerful nooses
to trap Krishna near Nirmocana,
but Vāsudeva-Krishna broke free.

27 This is the same Krishna
who strode up to Saubha
smashed the hill, and killed Dyumatsena
and his followers.

28 The Kauravas are venerably old,
so lotus-eyed Acyuta-Krishna,
thinking of dharma, does his best to overlook
their ill karma.

29 If the Kauravas and other rājās are intent
on imprisoning Govinda-Krishna,
they will become guests
in Yama's realm.

30 The Kauravas
are to *cakra*-wielding Krishna
like so many wisps of grass
scattered by a strong wind."

31 After Vidura had finished,
Keśava-Krishna faced Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and said, so that all standing near
could hear him:
"Rājā, if your hot-tempered sons
want to imprison me,

32 Let them try their utmost!
O ruler of the earth,
I can diagnose their anger
and I can cure them too.

33 But I will not do any karma
that is blameworthy and wrong.
Your sons will lose all
by being greedy.

34 Their criminal intent gives Yudhiṣṭhira
an edge over them.
I can, if I wish, immobilise them
and their followers, O Bharata,

35 And turn them over to Yudhiṣṭhira –
an easy-enough task.
But I will refrain from doing
anything censurable.

36 Let Duryodhana,
fired by wickedness and anger,
O raja, do exactly as he wishes before you,
O mahārāja.

37 I give this freedom to your sons."
Dhṛtarāṣṭra heard this,
he called Vidura
and said to him:
"Summon wicked, kingdom-greedy
Suyodhana-Duryodhana in my presence,

38 With all his friends, ministers, brothers,
and followers.
I will try to bring him back
to the right path."

39 So Kṣattā Vidura brought Duryodhana again
to the sabhā
with his brothers and rājās,
though Duryodhana was unwilling.

40 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra said to Duryodhana,
Duḥśāsana and Karṇa
and all the other rājās
accompanying them:

41 "Callous Duryodhana!
You have sought the help
of low-minded followers
in the commission of a criminal act –

42 An act condemnable and shameful,
an impossible act!
Only a family-desecrating fool like you
will think of it.

43 You and your vicious followers have planned
to imprison
invincible lotus-eyed Krishna,
whom none dares challenge.

44 Even the gods led by Vāsava-Indra
cannot harm him.
You are like a foolish child
crying for the moon.

45 You know very well
that neither gods, anti-gods,
humans, gandharvas, nor Nāgas
can defeat Keśava-Krishna.

46 Imprisoning Kesava-Krishna
is like grasping air,
or clutching the moon,
or balancing the earth on one's head."

47 Dhṛtarāṣṭra finished.
Kṣattā-Vidura looked straight
at the tempestuous son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Duryodhana,
and said to him:

48 "Duryodhana, listen to me carefully.
At Saubha's gate
the anti-god Dānava named Dvivida
showered Krishna
with what looked like
an irresistible volley of stones.

49 He thought violence would be the way
to destroy Mādhava-Krishna;
he tried and failed;
now you wish to try violence.

51 Six thousand mahā-anti-gods
in Nirmocana
failed with their nooses;
and now you wish to try violence.

52 O bull-brave Bharata! When only a baby,
Krishna killed the ogress Pūtanā;
as a child, he lifted Govardhana hill
to protect the cows.

53 He killed the vicious Ariṣṭa, Dhenukā,
the mahā-powerful Cāṇ ūra,
Aśvarāja, and the enormously wicked
king Kaṁsa.

54 He killed in battle Jarāsaṁdha, Vakra,
heroic Śiśupāla and Bāṇa;
many other rājās were also
eliminated by him.

55 Rājā Varuṇa and the inexhaustibly energetic
god of fire Pāvaka were humbled by him,
as was Śaci's husband Indra
when stealing the *pārijāta*-flower.

56 He killed Madhu and Kaiṭabha
as they reposed on the ocean;
in another birth
he killed Hayagrīva.

57 He is the All-Creator, himself not created.
He is Pauruṣa, Essence of Male Power.
He can do whatever he wishes,
he is Śauri-Krishna.

58 You cannot comprehend the awesome valiance
of Acyuta-Govinda-Krishna;
he has the fierce clear energy
of an untameable snake.

59 If you try to harm mahā-muscled untiring Krishna,
you and your ministers
will perish like moths
fluttering straight into a fire."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-ONE

1 When Vidura finished (continued Vaiśampāyana);
valiant Kesava-Krishna, slayer-of-enemies,
said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
Duryodhana:

2 "Deluded wicked fool Suyodhana-Duryodhana!
You think I am alone,
and so it is easy for you
to capture me.

3 Here are the Pāṇḍavas! the Andhakas!
the Vṛṣṇis!
the Ādityas! the Rudras! the Vasus!
the mahā-ṛṣis!"

4 As he said this, foe-slaying Kesava-Krishna
laughed loudly;
his laughter made his mahātmā body
flicker like lightning.

5 Thirty thumb-sized gods rushed out of his body!
They flowed like fire!
Brahmā sat on his forehead!
Rudra Śiva-appeared on his chest!

6 The Lokapāla guardians of the universe on his arms!
Agni
    from his mouth!
Ādityas,
Sādhyas,
Vasus,
Aśvins,

7 Maruts,
Indra,
The Viśva-devas,
Yakṣas,
Gandharvas,
Rākṣasas!

8 Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma
    from one arm!
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
    from the other!
Bow-armed Arjuna
    on his right!
Plough-wielding Balarāma
    on his left!

9 Behind him:
    Bhīma
    Yudhiṣṭhira
    Mādrī's twin sons!
Behind them:
    Andhakas
    Vṛṣṇis
    led by Pradyumna

10 And other chiefs
with upraised arms!
Conch
*Cakra*
Mace
Śakti-missile
Śārṅ ga-bow
Plough
Nandaka-javelin –

11 And other weapons
appeared brandished
in blazing splendour
in Krishna's many hands!

12 From his two eyes
two ears
and nose
like spark-emitting smoke
emanated mahā-fearful flames!

13 From the pores of his skin
sparks
like sunbursts!
Seeing mahātmā
Keśava-Krishna's
awesome
ātman,

14 The rājās
bewildered
closed their eyes –
all except
Droṇa
Bhīṣma
mahā-minded Vidura

15 And mahā-fortune-favoured Sañjaya.
Because they were rich in tapasyā
they received celestial vision
from Bhagavān Janārdana-Krishna.

16 Mādhava-Krishna's magnificent form
filled the sabha!
Divine *dundubhi*-drums sounded,
flowers fell.

17 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: "Favour me,
O lotus-eyed one!
O incomparable Yādava,
worker for the good of the world!

18 Revered one, *bhagavan*,
restore me my sight!
I wish to see you,
I wish to see nothing else."

19 Mahā-muscled Janārdana-Krishna said
to rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra:
"Delighter of the Kauravas,
I grant sight to your sightless eyes."

20 Mahārāja Janamejaya! Wonder of wonders!
Dhṛtarāṣṭra regained his sight
to have a vision
of Vāsudeva-Krishna's Universal Form.

21 The kings, awestruck by the restoration
of eyesight to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
along with the ṛṣis
eulogised Madhusūdana-Krishna.

22 And the earth shook, O bull-brave Bharata.
And the oceans heaved.
And the rulers of the earth
Were dumbfounded with wonder.

23 Foe-chastising tiger-among-men Krishna
indrew his magnificent,
celestial, auspicious and prosperous,
radiant multi-form.

24 Madhusūdana-Krishna took Sātyaki's hand
and Hārdikya-Kṛtavarman's hand,
and, with the permission of the ṛṣis,
left the place.

25 In the ensuing commotion, the ṛṣis,
    Nārada and others disappeared.
The hubbub subsided.
    A weird happening!

26 The Kauravas, and the assembled rājās,
    seeing tiger-among-men Krishna leave,
followed him as the gods follow Śatakratu-Indra
    of a thousand sacrifices.

27 But unimaginable-ātmaned Śauri-Krishna
    ignored the maṇḍala
of trailing rājās
    and left like a smoke-rich fire.

28 His white massive chariot, carved in gold
    and tinkling with *kiṅkiṇi*-bells,
with wheels that resounded
    like storm-clouds,

29 Covered with white tiger-skins,
    and pulled by magnificent horses
such as Sugrīva and Śaibya,
    was brought up before him by Daruka.

30 He saw the son of Hṛdika,
the mahā-chariot-hero Kṛtavarman,
a respected Vṛṣṇi hero,
    sitting in the chariot.

31 Foe-chastising Śauri-Krishna
    was about to depart
when mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra
    said to him:

32 "You have seen what power I have
    over my sons.
O foe-crusher, Janārdana-Krishna,
    nothing is now hidden from you,

33 I want peace for the Kauravas.
I will struggle for it.
Keśava-Krishna! I implore you –
do not think poorly of me.

34 I harbour no malice towards Pāṇḍu's sons,
Keśava-Krishna.
You know how I tried to dissuade
my son Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

35 The Kauravas, these rājās,
of the earth –
these rulers they are witness, O Mādhava-Krishna,
to my desire for peace."

36 Mahā-muscled Janārdana-Krishna (said Vaiśampāyana)
said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
to Duryodhana's grandfather Bhīṣma, Kṣattā-Vidura,
Bāhlīka and Kṛpa:

37 "You have personally seen what happened
in the assembly of the Kurus –
how the uncouth fool
angrily left his seat,

38 And how the world-ruler Dhṛtarāṣṭra
confesses to his powerlessness
With your permission,
I will return to Yudhiṣṭhira."

39 The maha-bowmen-heroes –
all the bull-brave Bharatas –
followed bull-brave Śauri-Krishna
to his chariot.

40 They included Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa,
Kṣattā-Vidura, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Bāhlīka, Aśvatthaman, Vikarṇa,
and mahā-chariot-hero Yuyutsu.

41 While the Kauravas looked on,
Krishna went in his large,
white, *kiṅkiṇi*-tinkling chariot
to meet his father's sister Kuntī.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: Entering Kuntī's home,
Krishna touched her feet
and informed her of what happened
in the assembly.

2 He said: "I and the ṛṣis offered
many suggestions,
all reasonable and practical,
but he turned them down.

3 The followers of Suyodhana-Duryodhana
are nearing their doom.
I need your permission to return quickly
to the Pāṇḍavas.

4 Tell me, mahā-wise lady,
what message I should convey
to the sons of Pāṇḍu.
I await your instructions."

5 Kuntī said: Keśava-Krishna,
tell the dharmātma rāja Yudhiṣṭhira:
My son! Your dharma is declining.
Do not abuse it any further.

6 Like a *śruti*-knower who mechanically
recites the Vedas,
and is therefore foolish, your mind mechanically
pursues dharma, O rājā.

7 You are a Kṣatriya, born from the arms
of Svayambhu-Brahmā.
Think of your dharma
and its stress on physical strength.

8 The Kṣatriya has to be cruel sometimes,
to protect people.
My elders told me a story about this.
Listen to it.

9 A long time ago, Kubera was pleased
with the rāja-ṛṣi Mucukunda;
he offered him the earth,
but the ṛṣi refused.

10 Instead he said: "I want a kingdom
by the strength of my arms."
This further amazed and pleased
Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.

11 Rājā Mucukunda did indeed by the practice
of Kṣatriya-dharma –
which he scrupulously observed –
attain the whole world.

12 A fourth of the dharma
of the subjects
who are well-protected by a rājā
goes to that rājā.

13 A rājā who follows dharma
becomes a god;
a rājā who follows adharma
goes to hell.

14 The justice of a king who abides
by his sva-dharma
safeguards the four castes
from the consequences of adharma.

15 If a rājā establishes perfect justice
in his kingdom,
he ushers in the finest age
known as Kṛta-Yuga.

16 Have no doubts about whether the rājā
makes the age,
or the age makes the rājā,
The rājā makes the age.

17 The rājā makes the Kṛta-Yuga,
the Tretā or Dvāpara;
the rājā is the maker of the fourth Yuga
also.

18 As maker of the Kṛta-Yuga,
a rājā enjoys total heaven.
As maker of the Tretā,
a rājā enjoys conditional heaven.

19 As maker of the Dvāpara,
he enjoys a mixed heaven.
As maker of the Kali,
he experiences endless misery.

20 Such a vicious king lives forever
in hell.
The earth suffers for his defects,
and he suffers for the earth's.

21 Follow the rāja-dharma
of your fathers and grandfathers.
Your behaviour is not the dharma
of a rāja-ṛṣi.

22 The king who vacillates
or becomes sentimentally pliable
does not get the fruits
of protecting his subjects.

23 When Pāṇḍu, I, and your grandfather
wished you success,
we had no idea you would behave
in this manner.

24 I always expected you to be brave,
yajña-performing, enterprising,
full of tapasyā, protector of your subjects,
a grand and glorious monarch!

25 Brahmins chanted *Svadhā* and *Svāhā*
and wished you
a long life, wealth and children
blessed by the gods.

26 Parents – even the gods – always expect
their children
to be generous, studious, concerned,
and yajña-observing.

27 Dharma or adharma, birth dictates duties.
*Tāta!* My son Yudhiṣṭhira!
All my high-born, learned sons
are reduced to misery.

28 What dharma can be greater
than that of a man
who is charitable and feeds the hungry ones
of the earth?

29 A man of dharma who rules a kingdom
should attract his subjects
towards himself by gifts, by gentleness,
or by force, if so required.

30 A Brahmin lives on alms;
a Kṣatriya protects others;
a Vaiśya accumulates wealth;
a Śūdra serves these three.

31 Begging is forbidden to you;
agriculture does not suit you.
You are a Kṣatriya, whose strength of arms
guards the persecuted and oppressed.

32 O mahā-muscled one, recover the ancestral
paternal kingdom –
use gentleness, dissension, gifts, force
or negotiation.

33 Can anything be more humiliating
than that your mother,
friendless and alone, should have to depend
on others for food?

34 Follow the dharma of rājās,
redeem your family honour.
Do not, with your brothers,
watch your merits waste away into misery.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-THREE

1 Kuntī continued: O foe-crushing hero!
There is an historical story concerning this,
about the conversation of Vidulā
with her intelligent son.

2 Tell Yudhiṣṭhira that story
or one even more moral.
This lady was noble-born and famous –
and very righteous.

3 Her name was Vidulā;
she cherished Kṣatriya-dharma,
was self-disciplined, famed among rājās,
percipient and far-sighted.

4 When she saw her son,
defeated by the Sindhu-rājā,
sprawled disconsolate on his bed,
she berated him with these words:

5 "I have a son who displeases me
and delights his foes.
Impossible that you are your father's son!
How were you born?

6 You lack manliness,
you are man in name only.
Show fortitude for your own sake.
Do not despair.

7 Don't under-estimate your ātman,
don't give in easily.
Aim high, do not fear,
and never entertain doubts.

8 Rise up, you coward!
Shake off this defeat-paralysis!
This only delights your foes,
and grieves your friends.

9 A little water satisfies a rivulet,
a little fills a mouse's paw,
a little satisfies
the complacent coward.

10 Die plucking the fangs of a snake!
Better that;
better a heroic death facing the foe
than cowardice.

11 Roam like a hawk seeking its prey;
trap your foes in holes.
Fight, you coward! Show your prowess,
not your doubts.

12 Why lie around like a corpse
shrivelled by lightning?
Rise, you coward, and shake off
your apparent defeat.

13 Do not disappear furtively;
let your karma show you.
Do not be second, third, or last –
be proudly first!

14 Flare up, even if briefly,
like *tinduka*-wood.
Do not futilely smoulder away
in billowing fireless smoke.

15 A swift, short fire is better
than sputtering smoke.
You are a prince – avoid cruelty
as well as sentimentality.

16 The man who does his karma
on the field of battle
fulfils his dharma
and compliments his own ātman.

17 The wise man is oblivious
to success or failure.
He finds alternatives,
even if it involves risking his life.

18 Develop your potential,
and face whatever consequences come.
If your abandon your dharma,
why live at all, my son?

19 You are a coward,
the rituals your perform are useless;
the roots of your pleasures are withered.
Why live at all?

20 Even when down, a wrestler holds on
to his foe's thigh.
Even when one's roots are cut,
one tries not to despair.

21 Look how well-bred horses
pull the heaviest loads!
Think of your manliness,
think of your nobility.

22 Remember the energy of the horses!
Pull your family name
out of the shame you sank it in!
You were the reason.

23 What good is the man
whose mahā-marvellous deeds
are not even spoken about?
He is neither man nor woman.

24 If a son is not respected for charity,
truth and tapasyā,
for learning and success,
he's nothing but mother's dung.

25 That man's a man who excels
in charity, truth,
tapasyā, learning,
and in assiduous activity.

26 Why should you live a life
that's mean and idle?
Why should you behave
like a beggar and a coward?

27 Why do you let your enemies
laugh at your downfall?
They despise you for having
neither robes nor trappings.

28 They mock your small income,
your poverty,
your spinelessness,
your acceptance of your lot.

29 Your friends think poorly of you.
Exiled from kingdom,
deprived of livelihood,
bereft of all pleasures,

30 We will be utterly ruined!
It is my fault,
my misbehaviour has destroyed
my race and family!

31 O Sañjaya, you're like Kali-yuga,
O my spineless son!
Woe on this useless, strengthless,
foe-delighting mother!

32 Let no mother's womb conceive
such a son!
Stand up! – not like filmy smoke
but like fierce fire!

33 Consume the heads of your enemies!
Be a man!
Show anger, not forgiveness!
Neither man nor woman

34 Is the person who shows mercy
and discards anger.
Contentment and softness destroy
a man's prosperity.

35 Lack of effort never brings success.
Pluck out these defects,
steel your heart.
Foe-crushing is the sign of manhood.

36 And how is a woman-like man
ever a man?
A powerful hero who performs
like a lion

37 May become a victim of fate,
yet remains a hero to his subjects;
the hero who sacrifices
personal comforts

38 For the prosperity of others becomes
The object of the rejoicing of courtiers."

39 "If you repudiate me," replied the son,
"will even this earth mean anything to you?
What good will be your jewels,
your joys, your life?"

40 His mother said, "Let such an earth
be fit for our foes!
Let an earth of pure-ātmaned people
be for our well-wishers!

41 What's the joy in being servantless
and powerless?
What's the point in living miserably
on others' charity?

42 *Tāta*! My son! May Brahmins and well-wishers
depend on you,
as creatures depend on rain, as gods depend
on Śatakratu-Indra of a hundred sacrifices.

43 That man's life is meaningful, Sañjaya,
who is like a tree
loaded with ripe fruit,
upon whom all creatures depend.

44 Excellent is the life of the hero
whose excellence supports his friends,
as Śakra-Indra supports
the joys of the *tridaśa*-gods.

45 The man who depends on the strength
of his own arms
finds fame in this life
and sublime fulfilment in the next."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FOUR

1 Vidulā continued: "If, however,
you discard manliness,
the alternative is a path of meanness
that is followed by wretches.

2 What's he but a thief – the Kṣatriya
who abandons energy and bravery,
and struggles merely
to keep alive?

3 My well-intentioned words,
helpful in every way,
are like medicine to a man
in death's last throes.

4 The followers of the Sindhu-rājā
are weak;
they wait for his downfall,
hoping that will bring them freedom.

5 Show your manliness, and his enemies
will desert him one by one,
with their armies,
and flock to you.

6 Make them allies, find shelter if necessary
in caves and forests;
wait for his downfall – for fall he must,
he is mortal.

7 Are you not Sañjaya the Victorious?
Then be Sañjaya!
Live up to your name, my son;
don't let me down.

8 When you were only a baby,
a prophetic, mahā-wise Brahmin said:
'He will face many hardships,
but he will emerge triumphant.'

9 I recall those words,
and I know you will win,
and so I say this to you, *tāta,* my son,
again and again.

10 How can a man fail if he inspires others
to be his allies?
Even his simplest efforts
will soon find fulfilment.

11 *Win or lose, I will fight!*
With this thought, Sañjaya,
make up your mind –
there is no turning back.

12 Nothing's more alarming,
according to the anti-god Śambara,
than the state in which today and tomorrow
remain uncertain.

13 Poverty is even worse, he said,
than the death of one's husband,
or the death of a son; for what's poverty
but a living death?

14 I was born noble,
I moved from one family mahā-lake
to another, loved by my husband,
commanding many servants.

15 I had many friends, I was happy,
I wore jewels
and rich garlands, I was well-dressed;
my friends were delighted.

16 What use will be your life, Sañjaya,
if you see me and your wife
wasting away
for lack of food?

17 What use at all will be your life
when you see our slaves,
our servants, our ācāryas and *purohitas*
all leaving us?

18 If I don't see you doing the duties
you did in the past
to earn respect, how will I ever
have peace of mind?

19 It will break my heart to say no
to a Brahmin.
Never have I or my husband said no
to a Brahmin.

20 We gave refuge to others,
never seeking it ourselves.
I will kill myself before I depend
on another.

21 Ferry us across the difficult-to-cross
ocean of life!
There is no boat – you be our boat.
Make place for us
where there is no place.
Revive us who are now dead.

22 Either decide you can face your foes,
or stop living.
What you are doing now
is fit only for eunuchs.

23 Give up this life of error and misdeed;
your ātman is troubled.
A hero recovers fame even if he kills
only one enemy.

24 Indra became Mahā-Indra,
the lord of the gods,
the drinker of *soma*, because he succeeded
in killing Vṛtra.

25 Proclaiming his name on the battlefield,
challenging his armour-clad enemies,
killing the famous warriors
who oppose him,

26 A hero succeeds in gaining mahā-renown
in a just fight;
his enemies are humbled and hurt,
and they bow to him.

27 Men who are cowards by nature
offer their wealth
to the battle-scarred hero
who fights for a selfless cause.

28 Collapse of kingdom notwithstanding,
threat to life notwithstanding,
noble men do not stop destroying enemies
trapped by them.

29 A war is a door to heaven,
  a battle is like *amṛta*-nectar.
The door is shut. Batter it open
  by killing your foes!

30 O rājā, rout your foes in battle!
  Follow your sva-dharma!
Don't lose heart, my son –
  strike terror among your foes!

31 I don't want to see you standing
  among your foes and grieving,
surrounded by sad friends
  and happy enemies.

32 Delight in the company of the daughters
  of great heroes!
Enjoy your royal possessions.
  Don't fall prey to the Sindhu girls.

33 A young man who is handsome and learned,
  who has good friends,
should work to gain renown
  in all parts of the world.

34 If, instead, you behave
  like a wild, lascivious bull,
what's it but suicide?
  If I hear you praising your foes,

35 Or accepting to walk behind them,
  what peace can I ever have?
In our family,
  no one has accepted defeat.

36 *Tāta*! My dear son, it is not right
  that you admit defeat.
I know what burns eternally
  in a Kṣatriya's heart.

37 Our ancestors have described it
  again and again.
Prajāpati himself implanted
  that everlasting Kṣatriya-honour.

38 The Kṣatriya who knows the karma
of a Kṣatriya
never bows to another out of fear
or insecurity.

39 He stands upright, he never bends.
To be strong is to be straight.
He will break,
but he will not bend.

40 The great-minded Kṣatriya
walks like a rutting elephant;
he bows only before Brahmins, Sañjaya,
and before dharma.

41 He rules over the other castes,
and destroys all mischief-doers.
With help or without,
that is his mission in life."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE

1 Her son replied: "Your heart, mother,
is made of black iron.
No pity, no softness;
only anger and martial courage.

2 Aho! What am I, a stranger?
Are you someone else's mother
that you urge me to fight?
Shame on Kṣatriya tradition!

3 Such bitter words – from a mother
to an only son!
Without me, of what value
is even the world to you?

4 What value are ornaments, enjoyments,
life itself?
What good are they without the presence
of your dear son?"

5 His mother replied: "Sañjaya,
the wise are motivated
by either dharma or artha.
With both in mind, I urge you to fight.

6 This is now the right time
to show your valour.
If you let the right time slip by,
without doing anything,

7 Your behaviour becomes wicked and harmful.
I cannot approve of it.
Sañjaya, if you behave dishonourably,
and I keep silent,

8 That loving silence is the affection
of a she-ass for her young;
it is worthless
and it is stupid.
Give up the way loved by fools
and scorned by the wise.

9 Enormous is the folly that most men
find convenient.
But you will be dear to me only
if you are noble,

10 Which means that you should
with your guṇa-talent and dharma and artha
pursue the path of the gods,
and of honest men.

11 The man who is happy
with a son or grandson
who is not humble and hardworking,
who is ill-intentioned,

12 And the man who is happy with a son
who does not do
what should be done,
and does what is not to be done –
better that such a man
should have no son at all.

13 Such a rascally son finds happiness
neither in this life nor in the next.
A Kṣatriya must fight,
must win battles, Sañjaya.

14 Dying, or winning,
he reaches the world of Indra.
Neither heaven nor the world of Śakra-Indra
has the happiness

15 Which a Ksatriya gets
by subjugating his enemies.
Though repeatedly repulsed,
a true warrior, nourished by anger,

16 Hopes to finally win.
He will die or kill his foe.
There is no other way for him
to find peace.

17 To a wise man, a trivial gain
is not worth having;
he soon tires of the little
and aspires for the large.

18 He is miserable until he gets
what he dearly desires;
he is like the Gaṅgā restless
to join the ocean."

19 "Don't speak to me like this, mother,"
the son exclaimed.
"I am your son. Try to understand.
At least be silent."

20 "I am pleased to see you concerned,"
his mother said.
"You press me to do my duty.
How about doing yours?

21 When you have killed all the warriors
of the Sindhus,
when you become victorious, then only
will you get my pūjā-respect."

22 "I have no wealth and no allies,"
her son replied.
"How can I win? Under the circumstances,
I played safe.

23 No hope of heaven for a wrong-doer,
no hope of kingdom for me.
That being so, tell me:
how should I fight my foes?

24 Tell me, for you are determinedly wise –
what should I do
in such a situation?
I will do whatever you order."

25 "*Tāta*! My son," said the mother, "why disgrace
your ātman by anticipating failure?
Unattained, gets attained;
attained, gets lost.

26 Don't work angrily or foolishly, *tāta,* my son.
Uncertain are the fruits of karma.
Remember that sometimes you'll succeed,
sometimes you'll fail.

27 One thing is certain – nothing will happen
without effort.
Don't expect any kind of success
without some kind of struggle.

28 Work can lead either to success
or to failure.
The man who realises in advance
that fruits are uncertain,

29 Detaches himself from the possibility
of success or failure.
You have the ātman of a king!
Be energetic!

30 Say to yourself, *I will do this*!
And do it, without flinching.
Act with auspicious help
from gods and Brahmins,

31 And success will be yours, my son.
The goddess of prosperity Lakṣmī
will dazzle you like the day-making
rising sun, Divākara.

32 I have seen that you are able
to learn
from examples and advice and provocation.
Exert your manhood!

33 Achieve your goal!
Those who hate your enemy,
those who are envious of him,
those weakened or dishonoured by him,

34 Those who loathe the sight of him –
join hands with them,
get their help, and scatter the ranks
of your enemy,

35 Like a mahā-storm dispersing clouds.
Make payments to them in advince,
be confident,
placate them.

36 This will make them turn to you.
When your enemy
sees you fearless, he will fear you
as he would a snake.

37 If you cannot crush a strong enemy,
at least try
to win him over by conciliation
and sweet words.

38 This is the way to prosper,
this the way to wealth.
Friends flock to the prosperous man
and seek his favours.

39 Friends forsake the unprospering man.
They treat him with suspicion,
they lcok down at him
with contempt.

40 It is impossible for any man
to even think
of regaining his kindom
by trusting his enemy."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SIX

1 "Never must a rājā," the mother said,
"succumb to fear.
Even when fear claws at his heart,
he must remain calm.

2 If a rājā shows fear,
all his subjects show fear too –
his army, his courtiers, his kingdom
get divided by fear.

3 One group will side with him,
another plot against him;
a third group, insulted earlier,
now prepares to revolt.

4 Only his closest friend stays near him,
like a cow
futilely trying to untie
her trussed-up calf.

5 Like friends sorrowing over the plight
of distressed friends,
are well-wishers. You have many such
you honoured earlier,

6 Who sympathise with you
and are ready to help.
Throw off fear. Your fear will lose you
your friends.

7 I say all this to test your strength,
your intelligence and courage,
to sustain and inspire you,
and re-invigorate you.

8 If you have faith in my words, rise,
my son Sañjaya!
Steady your mind
and think only of victory.

9 We have a treasury whose mahā-resources
are unknown to you.
They are known to me,
and I place them at your disposal.

10 My brave son Sañjaya!
You have many dependable friends
who will support you through good and bad,
and never retreat.

11 People such as these are the best –
faithful advisers,
they seek your welfare at all times,
O foe-crusher!"

12 When he heard these sensible words
(continued Kuntī),
the dark despair that had gripped Sañjaya's mind
instantly vanished.

13 "I'll save my sinking kingdom,"
said the son,
"or die. You know the future,
you must guide me.

14 I kept silent when you were speaking,
or replied briefly,
because I was eager to hear more wisdom
from you.

15 Your words are like *amṛta,*
they never satiate.
With my friends I will rise
and crush my foes!"

16 He became as excited as a horse
of high pedigree,
when pierced by the arrowy words
of his resolute mother.

17 It should be every courtier's duty
(continued Kuntī)
to use this story to dispel the despair
of weak rājās.

18 This *itihāsa* is story of *jaya*,
of triumph:
it helps conquer the world
and destroy enemies.

19 This story makes a woman give birth
to a son;
if repeated, it makes her give birth
to a hero –

20 A hero in knowledge, tapasyā,
gift-giving and courage,
a hero who dazzles like Brahmā,
is honoured by all,

21 A hero of prowess and great fame,
a mahā-chariot-hero,
who is wise and formidable,
winning, never losing,

22 Who crushes the wicked
and protects the dharma-followers.
Such is the truly valiant son
born to a Kṣatriya mother.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SEVEN

1 Kuntī said: "Go, Keśava-Krishna,
to Arjuna and tell him this:
When you were born
and I lay in the birth-room,

2 Surrounded by girls,
an enchanting sky-voice proclaimed:
*Kuntī, your son will rival*
*the thousand-eyed god Indra.*

3 *He will defeat all the Kauravas,*
*and, with Bhima to help him,*
*he will bring terror*
*to his enemies.*

4 *Your son will conquer the world,*
*and his splendour will dazzle heaven.*
*Destroying the Kauravas*
*with Vāsudeva-Krishna's help,*

5 *He will recover his share*
*of the paternal kingdom,*
*and, with his brothers, he will perform*
*three glorious sacrifices.*

6 You know how firm in truth
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna is,
how irresistible is the valour
of ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna.

7 So let it be, Dāśārha-Krishna,
as the sky-voice prophesied.
If there is such a thing as dharma,
it will come true, Vārṣṇeya-Krishna

8 And you too, Krishna,
will do what the sky-voice said.
I have absolute faith in the words
of the sky-voice.

9 I bow to Dharma, mahā-Dharma,
Sustainer of all!
Repeat this to Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, and say
to wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma:

10 *The time has come; this is why*
*a Kṣatriya mother gives birth.*
*Bull-brave men are not afraid*
*to face an enemy*

11 You know how Bhīma's mind works.
O foe-crusher,
Bhīma is restless until all his foes
are crushed.

12 And, Mādhava-Krishna,
tell the illustrious daughter-in-law
of mahātmā Pāṇḍu, Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
who is all-dharma-knowing:

13 *High-born lady, mahā-fortune-favoured lady,*
*your behaviour*
*towards my sons has been exactly*
*as expected of you.*

14 And say this Mādrī's two sons,
whose Kṣatriya-dharma is firm:
*The joys of heroism are preferable*
*to life itself.*

15 *The joys which are the fruit*
*of heroic courage always delight*
*the heart of one who follows Ksatriya-dharma.*
Say this, Puruṣottama-Krishna:

16 *The princess of Pāñcāla followed all dharmas,*
*yet in your presence they mocked her –*
*how can all of you*
*forgive this outrage?*

17 The kingdom lost did not hurt me,
the defeat at dice '
did not hurt me, the exile of my sons
did not hurte me

18 So much as the weeping of ample-figured,
dark-skinned Draupadī in the sabhā
as they molested her. Nothing more painful
than that mahā-insult.

19 A lady who followed a wife's dharma,
a lovely-hipped lady of Kṣatriya-dharma –
yet not one husband rose to protect Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
this many-husbanded-yet-husbandless lady of purity.

20 O mahā-muscled hero,
tell that tiger-among-men Arjuna,
the fierce arms-expert;
*Do whatever Draupadī says.*

21 You know that when Bhīma and Arjuna
are roused,
they turn into two Yamas,
leading even gods to their deaths.

22 When the Kauravas mocked Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
in the sabhā,
when Duḥśāsana spoke filthily to her,
he insulted Bhīma and Arjuna as well,

23 And in the very presence of all
the Kaurava heroes!
Tell them to remember that.
Ask about Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī and her children,

24 And tell them that I am well.
Go, Janārdana-Krishna,
on your auspicious mission,
and protect my sons."

25 Mahā-muscled Krishna (continued Vaiśampāyana)
did *pradakṣiṇa*
around Kuntī, and left majestically
like a lion.

26 He bid farewell to the bull-brave Kauravas,
Bhīṣma and others,
and with Karṇa in his chariot,
drove off with Sātyaki.

27 After the departure of Dāśārha-Krishna,
the Kaurava chiefs met
and discussed the mahā-marvellous
and mahā-bewildering event.

28 They said: *The earth is sick with folly,
and dying,
It is Duryodhana's doing –
his folly is the earth's doom.*

29 Meanwhile, Puruṣottama Krishna
left the city,
but on the way he had a long discussion
with Karṇa.

30 He bid farewell to Rādheya-Karṇa; then,
the-delight-of-all-the-Yādavas' Krishna
urged his horses
to a gallop.

31 Under Dāruka's direction, they sped
with mind-swiftness and wind-swiftness;
they seemed to gulp in
the sky itself.

32 Like swift-streaming hawks,
they covered the distance,
and brought the Śārṅga-bow-wielder Krishna
to Upaplavya.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT

1 The words of Kuntī (continued Vaiśampāyana)
made the mahā-chariot-heroes
Bhīṣma and Droṇa say
to disobedient Duryodhana:

2 "Tiger-among-men, you have heard
the words of Kuntī to Krishna,
words filled with excellent
*artha*-and-dharma.

3 Her sons will obey her in all details,
approved by Vāsudeva-Krishna.
O Kaurava, they will not rest
without recovering their kingdom.

4 You demeaned Draupadī in the sabhā,
but Pāṇḍu's sons,
trapped in the noose of dharma,
decided to ignore the insult.

5 But now, with all-weapons-expert Arjuna
at his side,
with strong-willed Bhīma, the Gāṇḍīva bow,
flag, chariot, two quivers,

6 And powerful Nakula and Sahadeva,
and Vāsudeva-Krishna himself
to help him,
Yudhiṣṭhira will not forgive you.

7 O mahā-muscled one, you witnessed how,
in Virāṭa's capital,
the wise son of Pṛtha-Kuntī routed us
in battle.

8 The fierce Dānavas called Nivātakavacas
were crushed in battle
by ape-emblemed Arjuna
with his *raudra*-missile.

9 You, your courtiers, and Karṇa,
clad in armour, in a chariot,
in Ghoṣayātrā, were saved by Arjuna
from the Gandharvas.

10 O excellent Bharata, make peace
with your Pāṇḍava cousin-brothers,
and save this world
from the very jaws of death.

11 Your elder brother is soft-spoken,
kind and wise, a man of dharma.
Discard your ill intentions,
go to that tiger-among-men.

12 When Yudhiṣṭhira sees you cast aside
your war-bow,
your rage-wrinkles smoothed, then only
will our race prosper in peace.

13 Go to him with your courtiers,
embrace that son of a king,
honour that rājā as you used to once,
O foe-chastiser!

14 Let Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma's elder brother,
and Kuntī's son,
stretch both his arms
and embrace you affectionately.

15 Let round-thighed, mahā-armed
and lion-shouldered Bhīma,
finest of punishers of enemies,
embrace you affectionately.

16 Let Kuntī's son, wavy-haired
and lotus-eyed
and conch-necked Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
also greet you respectfully.

17 Let the handsome-without-equal twins,
those tigers-among-men,
offer their loving pūjā-respect
to their elder brother.

18 Let the joyful tears of Krishna
and the Dāśārha chiefs
celebrate the reconciliation. Give up pride,
and join your brothers, O earth-lord!

19 And together with your cousin brothers
rule this earth,
while your chiefs and allies
gently bid you farewell and leave.

20 O Indra-among rājās, what good is war?
Listen to the words
of your well-wishers.
War means the doom of the Kauravas.

21 The stars and planets are inauspicious.
Fearful signs portend the doom of the Kṣatriyas.
Birds and beasts of ill omen
are everywhere,

22 Specially in the places where our armies
are encamped.
Shooting stars predict further disaster
for your soldiers.

23 O lord of the earth, look at the vultures
circling high above our army,
look at our soldiers dispirited
in their war-vehicles.

24 The capital does not look the same,
nor the palace;
howling jackals prowl
in the four fire-lit directions.

25 Listen to us, to your father and mother.
We wish you well.
O mahā-muscled one,
in your hands lies peace or war.

26 If you reject your well-wishers' advice,
O enemy-crusher,
Arjuna's arrows will spread havoc
among the ranks of your army.

27 So will the loud, repeated mahā-roars
of brave Bhīma.
The twang of the Gāṇḍīva will remind you
of our words,
which are – 'Reject our advice,
and the worst will happen'."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-NINE

1 Duryodhana bent his head,
looked out of the corners of his eyes,
furrowed his forehead,
and kept silent.

2 They noticed his absent-minded look;
bull-brave Bhīṣma and Droṇa
glanced quickly at each other,
and said to him again:

3 "What can be more terrible
than that we should confront
elder-honouring, unjealous, truthful Pārtha-Arjuna?
(Bhīṣma said this).

4 Droṇa added: "I love Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
more than my son Aṣvatthāman.
Ape-bannered Arjuna also, O rājā,
respects me greatly.

5 But Kṣatriya-dharma demands
that I fight Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
whom I love more than my own son.
*Dhik!* Shame on such dharma!

6 It is through my grace and training
that dreadful-deed-doer Bibhatsu-Arjuna
became the unexcelled bow-wielder
of this earth.

7 Like a fool who is ignored at a yajña,
a traitor, a rascal, a negative thinker,
a cheat and a liar
never get pūjā-respect from the honest.

8 A wicked-ātmaned man ignores good adivce,
and pursues wickedness:
a good-ātmaned man ignores bad advice,
and does good deeds.

9 You harmed them, yet Pāṇḍu's sons
wish you well, O excellent Bharata,
though you continue to harbour wickedness
against them.

10 The eldest Kauravas, I and Vidura
and Vāsudeva-Krishna
have advised you for your welfare,
but you do not listen.

11 *I am strong!* You think that's enough to overpower
the Pāṇḍavas – like a man
trying to swim across the shark-and-*makara*-filled
waters of the flooded Gaṅgā.

12 You dress yourself up
in Yudhiṣṭhira's cast-off robes,
and think yourself rich.
You bask in the prosperity of another!

13 Yudhiṣṭhira lived in the forest
with Draupadī and his brothers,
and no king had the power and courage
to dispossess him.

14 Yudhiṣṭhira's glory is like the glory
of Ailavila-Kubera, the god of riches;
before him,
even rājās are servants.

15 In fact, he obtained precious gems
from Kubera's realm,
and the Pāṇḍavas will now attack you
for their share of the kingdom.

16 We have both studied, donated,
performed yajñas, pleased Brahmins.
Bhīṣma and I
do not have long to live now.

17 But you – losing happiness, kingdom,
wealth, friends –
are facing mahā-calamity
by fighting the Pāṇḍavas.

18 Illustrious, truth-speaking Draupadī devī,
lady of tapasyā, fierce-vowed –
how will you ever defeat Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
whose victory she desires?

19 His adviser is Jasnārdana-Krishna,
his brother is Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
the greatest arms-wielder.
How will you ever defeat him?

20 How will you ever defeat the Pāṇḍava
who is supported
by rigid-vowed Brahmins
dedicated to severe self-discipline?

21 Let me repeat to you the advice
that a well-wisher
should give to save a friend
from an ocean of sorrows –

22 Do not fight the Pāṇḍava heroes.
For Kaurava prosperity, make peace.
Do not despatch your sons, ministers and army
to the realm of Yama."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY

1 "Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"Madhusūdana-Krishna helped Karṇa
into his chariot,
and left while princes and servants watched.

2 What did that valiant foe-slaying
Govinda-Krishna tell him?
What pleasing words did Krishna speak
to Rādhā's son?

3 What were the words, harsh or gentle,
the Krishna spoke
in a voice as deep as a monsoon cloud's –
tell me, Sañjaya."

4 They were bitter – and mild (said Sañjaya),
loving and full of dharma,
truthful
and meant for his welfare,

5 Agreeable to the heart.
Let me repeat to you, Bharata,
what high-ātmaned Madhusūdana-Krishna
said to Karṇa.

6 "Son of Rādhā," began Krishna,
"you have honoured
many Veda-wise Brahmins,
and selflessly sought truth from them.

7 Karṇa, you know all the eternal words
of the Vedas,
you are familiar with the subtleties
of the Dharma-śāstras.

8 The śāstras describe a Kānīna as son
of unwed virgin,
and Sahoḍha as son conceived before
and born after marriage –
both must treat as father
the man their mother marries.

9 You, Karṇa, are one such;
by dharma you're Pāṇḍu's son;
therefore, the Dharma-śāstras confirm your right
to be rājā.

10 On your father's side, are Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons,
on your mother's the Vṛṣṇis.
O bull-brave hero!
Both are your kinsmen.

11 *Tāta*! My friend, come with me,
let us proclaim freely to Pāṇḍu's sons
that you are Kuntī's son
born before Yudhiṣṭhira.

12 The five Pāṇḍava brothers,
the five sons of Draupadī,
and Subhadrā's undefeated son Abhimanyu
will touch your feet.

13 All the rājās and princes who are allies
of the Pāṇḍavas,
all the Andhakas and all the Vṛṣṇis
will touch your feet.

14 Lustral jars of gold and silver
and terracotta,
and fragrant herbs, seeds, creepers,
spices, and gems –

15 These will be brought for your anointing
by wives of rājās
and their daughters. Furthermore,
Draupadī will come to you
in her sixth menstrual month,
and take you as a husband.

16 The finest of the twice-born,
Dhaumya of disciplined ātman,
will light the holy fire
and supervise your anointment.

17 Let the *purohita of* the Pāṇḍavas
who knows all Brahma-rituals,
and the five Pāṇḍava brothers,
those bull-brave mortals,

18 And Draupadī's five sons,
and the princes of Pāñcāla,
Draupadī, and Cedi, and myself too,
anoint you lord of the earth.

19 Let rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Dharma,
be heir-apparent, the yuva-rājā;
let that disciplined dharmātmā,
holding a white feather-fan,

20 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Kuntī,
drive behind you in a chariot.
Let the son of Kuntī,
mahā-powerful Bhīma,

21 Hold the royal white umbrella
over your head,
and your tiger-skin-draped chariot
ring with a hundred *kiṅkiṇī*-bells

22 As Arjuna drives it,
urging the pure-white horses.
Let Abhimanyu stand beside you
as your personal guard.

23 Let Nakula and Sahadeva,
and the five sons of Pāñcālī-Draupadī,
and the mahā-chariot-hero Śikhaṇḍin
serve you.

24 I will attend on you with the Andhakas
and the Vṛṣṇis, O lord of the earth,
and the heroes of the Dāśārha race
will by your kinsfolk.

25 O mahā-muscled one, enjoy the kingdom
with your brothers
with devotions and chants
and other auspicious rituals.

26 The Draviḍas, Kuntalas, Āndhras,
the Tālacaras
and Cūcupas and Veṇupas
will be your royal vanguard.

27 Professional bards and minstrels
will sing your praises,
and the Pāṇḍavas will proclaim:
*Victory to Vasuṣeṇa-Karṇa!*

28 Circled by Kuntī's sons
like the moon by stars,
rule this kingdom, son of Kuntī,
and gladden her heart.

29 Let your friends celebrate,
your enemies suffer!
Let there be amity with Pāṇḍu's sons,
who are your brothers."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-ONE

1 Karṇa replied: "Keśava-Krishna,
I realise you speak these words
out of love and goodwill; you speak, O Vārṣṇeya,
for my benefit, as a *sakhā*.

2 Of course dharma tells me
that I am the son of Pāṇḍu;
so the Dharma-śāstras say;
you have the same view, Krishna.

3 I was conceived before marriage, Janārdana-Krishna,
by her union with the Sun.
At birth, with his approval,
she abandoned me.

4 Krishna! That is how I was born.
Dharma says I am Pāṇḍu's son.
But Kuntī deserted me,
not caring for my welfare.

5 Adhiratha found me, a baby,
took me to his home,
and lovingly placed me before Rādhā,
O Madhusūdana-Krishna.

6 The instant Rādhā saw me,
  love-milk ozed from her breasts;
she cleaned my urine, Mvdhava-Krishna,
  and she washed my filth.

7 How can I, if I follow
  all the Dharma-śāstras
and know what dharma is,
  not give her *piṇḍa*-ancestor-homage?

8 Adhiratha the charioteer looks on me
  as his son,
and I, out of love, look on him
  as my father.

9 He performed my infancy rites
  as enjoined in the śāstras, Mādhava-Krishna,
because he loved me as a father loves his son,
  Janārdana-Krishna.

10 He called the twice-born
  and named me Vasuṣeṇa.
When I came of age,
  he chose suitable brides for me.

11 I have many sons and grandsons now by them.
  Janārdana-Krishna,
my love for them is a deep bond
  between us.

12 I cannot break these ties –
  no, not for gold, Govinda-Krishna,
not for pleasure, not for the earth,
  not out of fear.

13 Under Duryodhana's care, in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's family
  for thirteen years, Krishna,
I have freely pursued by activities,
  ruling with no hindrance.

14 I have supervised many yajñas
  with the Sūtas;
my marriage-ties and other ties
  are all with the Sūtas.

15 Knowing I was on his side,
Duryodhana prepared for war, Krishna,
knowing that the Pāṇḍavas
would be opposing him.

16 That is why I have been selected, Acyuta-Krishna,
as the fit match for the chariot-duel –
with ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
as my rival.

17 Not fear of death, not greed,
and not fear of capture, Janārdana-Krishna,
will make me betray
the intelligent son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

18 If I refuse now to fight Pārtha-Arjuna
in a chariot-duel,
my name – his too – will be sullied,
both of us dishonoured.

19 I know you speak for my good.
I also know, Madhusūdana-Krishna,
the Pāṇḍavas will follow your advice.
No doubt of that.

20 But you must keep our talk secret
for the time being, Madhusūdana-Krishna.
That way alone lies our good,
O delighter of the Yadavas.

21 If the dharmātmā rājā,
totally self-disciplined Yudhiṣṭhira,
knows me to be Kuntī's eldest son,
he will abdicate his royal right.

22 And if I am given
that vast and flourishing kingdom,
O foe-slaying Madhusūdana-Krishna
I will pass it on to Duryodhana.

23 May dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
who has Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna for guide
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna as co-warrior –
may he be rājā forever.

24 Let all the earth and kingdom be his who has
the mahā-chariot-hero Bhīma on his side,
Nakula, Sahadeva, Draupadī's five sons,
O Mādhāva-Krishna,

25 And Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the princes of Pāñcāla,
the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki,
Uttamaujas, Yudhāmanyu,
Satyadharman of the Somakas,

26 The Cedi princes, Cekitāna,
and never-defeated Śikhaṇḍin,
the royal Kekaya brothers,
with complexions like *indragopa*-insects,

27 And mahā-minded Kuntibhoja,
splendid like the rainbow,
Bhima's maternal uncle,
the mahā-chariot-hero Śyenajit,
Śañkha the son of Virāṭa, and you,
Janārdana-Krishna, an ocean of valour.

28 What a glorious gathering of Kṣatriyas,
O Krishna!
This glorious kingdom known to all rājās
is Yudhiṣṭhira's already!

29 O chief of the Vṛṣṇis,
Duryodhana will soon hold
a massive weapons-yajña,
where you will be witness, Janārdana-Krishna.

30 You will be the *adhvaryu*-priest of the yajña,
and ape-bannered, mail-clad,
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
will be the *hotṛ-purohita* guide,

31 The Gāṇḍīva bow will be the ladle
of the yajña, O Mādhava-Krishna,
the strength of soldiers will be the ghee-libations,
and the mantras will be Savyasācī-Arjuna's
Aindra, Pāśupata, Sthūṇakarṇa
and Brāhma-missiles.

32 Subhadrā's son Abhimanyu, the equal
or even the superior of his father,
will be the Vedic chant
of the yajña.

33 The *udgātṛ* chant will be tiger-among-men
mahā-powerful Bhīma,
who will be the preparer also,
that fierce war-shouter, the elephant-crusher.

34 And dharmātmā rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
will be chief Brahmin
engaged in the *japa*-meditation
and the *homa*-fire.

35 The noise of conch-shells, tabors,
drums, and heroes roaring like lions
will announce, Madhusūdana-Krishna,
the Subrahmaṇyā invocation.

36 Nakula and Sahadeva, Mādrī's twins,
illustrious mahā-valiant heroes,
will be the *śamitra* priets sacrificing animals
at that yajña.

37 Glittering with multi-coloured flagstaffs, Govinda-
Krishna, the shining chariots will be the stakes
where the beasts are tied during the yajña,
Janārdana-Krishna.

38 Barbed-*karṇi*-arrows, *nālika* pipe-missiles,
*nārāca*-arrows, *tomara*-lances,
and arrows with heads like calves' teeth
will be the spoons
and the vessels for the *soma*,
and bows will be purifying strainers,

39 Swords will be *kapālas*, and severed heads
of slain soldiers
will be the *puroḍaśa* cakes, and their blood, Krishna,
the ghee libations.

40 *Śakti*-spears will serve
as stirrers of the sacred fire,
maces will be ridge-poles, Droṇa and Kṛpa
will be the *sadasya*-priests.

41 The arrows shot by the Gāṇḍīva-wielder
and by chariot-heroes
led by Droṇa and Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
will be the sacred yajña-ladles.

42 Sātyaki will be the chief helper
of the *adhvaruy*-priest;
Duryodhana will perform the yajña,
his mahā-army play his wife's part.

43 And mahā-powerful Ghaṭotkaca, as *śāmitra*,
late at night, O mahā-muscled Krishna,
will slay the sacrificial animals
and start the yajña.

44 The *dakṣiṇā*-gift will be Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
the powerful hero,
who was born from the mouth
of the sacred fire, Krishna.

45 I did speak cruelly to the Pāṇḍavas,
but only to please Duryodhana.
For that wrong, Krishna,
I am deeply sorry.

46 When you see me killed by Savyasācī-Arjuna,
then, O Krishna,
you may perform the *puniściti*-concluding
yajña-rituals.

47 When the loudly-roaring sons of Pāṇḍu
drink Duḥśāsana's blood,
consider that as the final drinking
of the ritual *soma*.

48 When Pāñcāla Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Śikhaṇḍin
rout Droṇa and Bhīṣma,
then the yajña initiated by Duryodhana
will have its intermission, Janārdana-Krishna.

49 And when mahā-powerful Bhīma
kills Duryodhana, then,
consider the yajña initiated by Duryodhana
to have terminated, O Mādhava-Krishna.

50 When the wives of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's grandsons
huddle together, Keśava-Krishna,
having lost their protectors, their sons,
and their husbands,

51 And lament in the presence of Gāndhāri,
with dogs and vultures roaming the battlefield,
that will be the yajña's final bath,
Janārdana-Krishna.

52 O bull-brave Kṣatriya Madhusūdana. Krishna!
Stop the Kṣatriyas, ripe in knowledge and age,
withering into inglorious deaths
through peace-making.

53 O Keśava-Krishna! The maṇḍala of Kṣatriyas
will meet death with weapons
on Kurukṣetra,
the holiest spot in the three worlds.

54 O lotus-eyed Vārṣṇeya,
manipulate things for our welfare –
let all the Kṣatriya warriors together
find heaven.

55 As long as the hills, as long as the rivers are,
Janārdana-Krishna,
so long will this glorious event last –
for ever and for ever.

56 And Brahmins will recite the story
of the *Mahābhārata*, O Varṣṇeya-Krishna.
The wealth of Kṣatriyas
is what is won on the battlefield.

57 So let me face Kuntī's son Arjuna
on the battlefield, Keśava-Krishna.
And what has passed between us –
for ever keep it secret, O foe-crusher."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-TWO

1 Keśava-Krishna, the slayer of heroic foes
(continued Sañjaya),
heard these words of Karṇa, laughed loudly,
and asked with a smile:

2 "Don't you want this kingdom
the way I suggested?
Don't you want the earth I am giving
to you?

3 The Pāṇḍavas are sure
to win in this battle;
the *vānara*-rāja's
victorious banner
has already been raised
and waves in the breeze.

4 The divine artificer
Bhaumana-Viśvakarman
makes it shine in the sky
like the rainbow of Indra.
Victorious and celestial
spirits are everywhere.

5 It spread for a *yojana*,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's banner,
over mountains and trees.
O Karṇa, this war-flag
has the dazzle of fire
as it waves in the sky.

6 When you see Arjuna
in his white-horsed chariot
driven by Krishna, using the Aindra, Āgneya,
and Marūta missiles,

7 When you hear the twang of the Gāṇḍīva
shattering the sky like thunder,
then the Kṛta, Tretā and Dvāpara Yugas
will end.

8 When you see Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
on the battlefield,
guarding his his mahā-army with *japa*-meditation
and *homa*-faith,

9 Shrivelling his enemies
with the fierce lustre of the sun,
then the Kṛta, Tretā, and Dvāpara Yugas
will end.

10 When you see mahā-powerful Bhīma
drink the blood of Duḥśāsana
and dance deliriously
on the battlefield,

11 Like a rutting elephant
that has routed a rival,
then the Kṛta, Tretā, and Dvāpara Yugas
will end.

12 When you see Droṇa, Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma
and Kṛpa,
along with Suyodhana-Duryodhana
and Jayadratha the Sindhu-rājā,

13 Rushing together to battle
with ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
then the Kṛta, Tretā, and Dvāpara Yugas
will end.

14 When you see the twin sons of Mādrī,
mahā-powerful warriors,
slicing through the ranks of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
like two elephants,

15 As they drive in their chariots
and hurl fierce missiles,
then the Kṛta, Tretā, and Dvāpara Yugas
will end.

16 Go, Karṇa, and tell Droṇa, Kṛpa,
and Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma
that this month food, drink and fuel
are plentiful.

17 The plants are flowering
The trees are filled with fruits
The ponds are crystal clear
Their water sweet
not too warm and not too cold
There are no flies anywhere
It is a delightful season.

18 Seven more days, and the *amāvāsya* full moon
will appear.
Let us fight then, for Śakra Indra presides
on that day.

19 Tell all the rajas who have come here
ready for battle
that I will fulfil whatever their wishes
may be.

20 Led by Duryodhana, all the rājās
and their sons
will perish in the missile carnage,
and achieve the highest goal."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THREE

1 Karṇa listened to Keśava-Krishna's
excellent and well-intentioned words,
offered pūjā-respect to Madhusūdana-Krishna,
and replied:

2 "You know everything, so why try to confuse
and fool me, O mahā-muscled Krishna?
You know the whole world is on the brink
of utter destruction –

3 An extinction whose agents will be me,
and Śakuni,
and Duḥśāsana, and king Duryodhana,
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra

4 A mahā-calamity looms over us, Krishna,
in which the blood
of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas
will drench the gory earth.

5 Consumed by flaming war-weapons,
rājās and princes,
under Duryodhana's leadership,
will go to the realm of Yama.

6 Madhusūdana-Krishna,
terrible dreams have been dreamt,
and terrible omens seen,
and terrible accidents have occurred.

7 Horripilating accidents, O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna!
And omens signifying
the defeat of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,
and Yudhiṣṭhira's victory.

8 The mahā-effulgent planet Śanaiṣvara
afflicts the Rohiṇī constellation
and portends disaster
for earth's creatures.

9 The planet Aṅgaraka, Madhusūdana-Krishna,
bypassing the Jyeṣṭha constellation,
swings towards Anurādhā,
indicating the deaths of friends.

10 Mahā-fear is threatening the Kauravas,
O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna,
because the planet Mahāpāta afflicts
the Citrā constellation.

11 The moon's dark spot has changed position.
Rāhu eclipses the sun.
The skies discharge meteors;
the earth trembles.

12 A fierce trumpeting of elephants,
war-horses shedding tears
and refusing to eat and drink,
O Mādhava-Krishna –

13 All these omens can signify
only a great cataclysm,
a bloody massacre of human beings,
O mahā-muscled one.

14 They hardly eat anything, yet horses,
elephants and humans,
O Keśava-Krishna,
produce huge lumps of excreta.

15 Madhusūdana-Krishna, the wise interpret
all these signs
as indicating the doom
of Duryodhana's entire army.

16 The Pāṇḍava soldiers, on the other hand,
Krishna, are cheerful.
The deer pass on their right –
an omen of victory.

17 They pass on the left of Duryodhana,
O Keśava-Krishna,
and eerie voices are heard –
all omens of defeat.

18 Auspicious birds trail the Pāṇḍavas –
peacocks, *haṁsas,*
cranes, *cātakas,*
and large flocks of *jīvaṁjīvakas.*

19 Vultures, *kaṅkas*, flocks of *bakas*,
hawks, rākṣasas,
wolves and mosquitoes, in large numbers,
trail the Kauravas.

20 No sounds issue from the drums
of Duryodhana's army,
while the Pāṇḍava drums resound
even without drummers.

21 From the water-reservoirs in the camp
of Duryodhana,
bull-roars are heard –
a sure omen of defeat.

22 The gods send showers of blood and flesh,
O Mādhava-Krishna,
and the Gandharva-city shines
like the sun,

23 A dazzle of walls, moats, ramparts,
and pillars;
a black *parigha*-mace can be seen
blocking the sun.

24 At *saṁdhyā*-time of sunrise and sunset,
horrendous spectacles appear
while jackals howl –
omens of defeat.

25 One-winged, one-eyed, and one-legged birds
hover in the air,
shrieking and wailing –
omens of defeat.

26 Black-necked, red-clawed,
and fierce-looking birds
fly towards the army in the evening –
omens of defeat.

27 Duryodhana mocks Brahmins and elders,
O Madhusūdana-Krishna,
and laughs at all his faithful servants –
omens of defeat.

28 The east is red, the south is black
like war-weapons,
the west is earth-grey,
the north conch-white –
all the four quarters omens of defeat,
O Madhusūdana-Krishna.

29 The four quarters in Duryodhana's camp
seem ablaze –
what can this confusion mean except defeat,
Mādhava-Krishna?

30 I had a dream, Acyuta-Krishna,
in which I saw Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers climbing the stairs
of a thousand-pillared palace.

31 I saw them clearly –
they wore white head-coverings,
they were dressed in white,
they sat on white seats.

32 In the same dream I saw this earth of yours,
Janārdana-Krishna,
crimsoned with blood
flowing from cast-away weapons.

33 Infinitely powerful Yudhiṣṭhira
climbed a hill of human bones,
smiled and ate sweet ghee-curd
from a golden cup.

34 I saw Yudhiṣṭhira swallow the earth
you gave him.
What can this mean
except that he will be victor?

35 Cruel-karma-creator Vṛkodara Bhima
also climbed a hill, mace in hand,
and seemed to be swallowing the earth,
that tiger-among-men.

36 What can this mean except that he
will kill us all in the maha-war?
I know, Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna,
that where dharma is, victory is.

37 Wielder-of-the-Gāṇḍīva Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
gloriously radiant
atop an elephant,
was seen with you beside him.

38 I have not the slightest doubt, Krishna,
that you will kill
all the rulers of the earth
whom Duryodhana leads.

39 Nakula, Sahadeva,
the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki,
with white ornaments and white garlands,
dressed in white,

40 Were carried in palanquins
on the shoulders of men;
I saw a white umbrella shading the heads
of these three tigers-among-men.

41 I saw three others also, Janārdana-Krishna,
in white head-coverings
in the ranks of Duryodhana's army.
They are, Keśava-Krishna:

42 Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa,
and Kṛtavarman of the Sātvatas,
All other kings, however,
bad blood-red head-coverings.

43 I saw, on camels,
the mahā-chariot-heroes Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, myself, and also Duryodhana,
O radiant maha-muscled Krishna,

44 Proceeding to the southern territory
of Agastya;
in a short time, Janārdana-Krishna,
the procession reached Yama's abode.

45 All those rājās, and I with them,
all this maṇḍala of Kṣatriyas
will die in the Gāṇḍīva-fire.
No doubt of that."

46 Krishna said, "You are right, Karṇa.
The world is doomed.
It is doomed
because you do not accept my advice.

47 When the world's doom nears, *tāta*, my friend,
wrong appears right,
wrong gets embedded in the heart
and stays there."

48 "O mahā-muscled Krishna," replied Karṇa,
"if I survive
this carnage of Kṣatriyas,
I will greet you after battle,

49 Or I will greet you in heaven, Krishna.
Either way we will meet.
O faultless one,
I think we will meet in heaven."

50 Saying this, (Sañjaya said),
Karṇa embraced Mādhava Krishna tightly,
they bid farewell, Karṇa dismounted,
and Keśava-Krishna drove off.

51 Rādheya-Karṇa climbed
into his own Jāmbu-gold-decorated chariot,
and, depressed, returned to his camp
with all of us.

52 Keśava-Krishna and Sātyaki in their chariot
drove off swiftly,
Krishna repeatedly urging his charioteer,
"Fasten! Faster!"

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR

1 Vaiśampāyana said:
So Krishna failed to persuade Karṇa.
He left the Kauravas and went to the Pāṇḍavas
Kṣattā-Vidura went to Kuṇtī, and said slowly and sadly:

2 "Mother of living children,
you know how opposed I am to war.
My throat's dry with shouting,
but Suyodhana-Duryodhana refuses to listen.

3 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira has the kings
of Cedi, Pāñcāla and Kekaya on his side;
he has Bhīma, Arjuna, Krishna, Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki
and the twins.

4 He isolates himself in Upaplavya.
He cultivates dharma.
As the gentle wish the strong well,
he wishes his kinsmen well.

5 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra has grown senile.
He does not want peace.
His fondness for his sons
veers his mind away from dharma.

6 The wicked schemings
of Jayadratha, Karṇa, Duḥśāsana and Śakuni
are sure to lead to family break-ups.

7 When adharma schemes against dharma,
sooner or later
it suffers the consequences.

8 Who can approve
of this insult to dharma by the Kauravas?
If Keśava-Krishna's peace efforts fail,
Pāṇḍava war preparations will begin.

9 The wrongs of the Kauravas will lead
to a massacre of Kṣatriyas heroes.
This thought makes me sleepless day and night."

10 Kuntī heard the well-meant words of Vidura,
and sighed deeply.
Sadness and despair overcame her.

11 "Shame on wealth that leads
to the slaughter of relatives!
This war will sunder friends.

12 What greater sorrow can there be
than this? –
the Pāṇḍavas, Cedis, Pāñcālas and Yadavas
fighting against the Bharatas.

13 War is monstrous.
What triumph is there in killing kinsmen?
Better be poor and lose
than win and be rich.
Yet not to fight too is a shame.

14 I am so confused! It pains my heart!
Grandfather Pitāmaha Bhīṣma, son of Śāntanu,
ãcārya Drona who is also the supreme warrior,

15 And Karṇa are on Duryodhana's side.
This makes me more afraid.
I am sure ãcārya Droṇa will not fight his disciples.

16 I am sure Pitāmaha Bhīṣma will show compassion.
That leaves only Karṇa
who continues to follow wicked-minded Duryodhana.

17 He is stubborn, fanatically dedicated.
He hates the sons of Pāṇḍu.
He is very strong. He wants to harm them.

18 I burn when I think
of Karṇa's hatred of the Pāṇḍavas.
Today I hope
to soften his heart in their favour.

19 I will go to him today
and tell him the truth.
Because I pleased *bhagavan* Durvāsas,
he gave me a boon

20 Enabling me to summon anybody I wished
with mantras.
I was then living with my father,
in the inner apartments of rājā Kuntibhoja's palace.

21 Confused, and afraid, yet curious,
wondering if the boon would really work,
wondering if the Brahmin's mantra was really effective,

22 Because I am a woman,
because I was then only a girl
guarded by my nurse, surrounded by other girls,
revolving the thought in my mind, –

23 How to escape blame,
how to save my father from shame,
how to be favoured without doing wrong –

24 I remembered the Brahmin,
I respected him in my mind,
I was only a girl, unmarried,
I was curious, I was a virgin
When Arka the sun-god entered me.

25 I was an unmarried girl
when I cherished him in my womb.
My son will not refuse his mother now,
he will not act against the welfare of his brothers."

26 Such was the excellent thinking of Kuntī.
She hurried to the Bhāgīrathī river
to put it in practice.

27 On the banks of the Gaṅgā,
Pṛthā-Kuntī heard the Vedas chanted by her son,
a man of compassion and truth.

28 She stood behind him, patiently.
He raised his arms and stood still,
facing the east. The lady of tapasyā
Waited for his *japa*-meditation to end.

29 The Vṛṣṇi lady, the Kaurava wife
waited;
she wilted in the sun's heat
like a faded lotus garland.
She sheltered in the shade of Karṇa's dress.

30 Disciplined Karṇa meditated till the sunrays
had heated his back.
He turned.
He saw Kuntī.
He joined his palm in *añjali.*

31 He observed the custom.
The proud and mahā-powerful son of Vikartana,
finest of men of dharma, also known as Vṛṣa,
smiled, *praṇāma-ed* Kuntī, and said:

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FIVE

1 "I am Karṇa,
son of Rādhā and Adhiratha,
I bow to you.
Why are you here?
What can I do for you?"

2 Kuntī replied:
"You are Kuntī's son, not Rādhā's.
Adhiratha is not your father –
you were not born a Sūta.
Please believe me, Karṇa.

3 I was unmarried when I conceived you.
You were the first life in my womb.
My son, you are a Pārtha,
you were born in Kuntirājā's palace.

4 O Karṇa, finest of fighters,
the sun-god Virocana whose light makes all things visible
fathered you on me.

5 Your birth is divine, my son.
You were born in my father's palace
with gold ear-rings and a skin-coat of mail,
and you shone with glory.

6 Because you do not know this,
because you do not know who your brothers are,
you serve Duryodhana.
It is not right that you do this, my son.

7 According to dharma,
the finest fruit of dharma
is to earn the approval of one's father and devoted mother
by pleasing them.

8 The majesty of Yudhiṣṭhira,
which Arjuna protected once,
has been usurped by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana.
Recover it from his selfish hands,
and be yourself majestic.

9 Let all the Kauravas today see
Karṇa and Arjuna, brother and brother,
reconciled.
Make the wicked bow down!

10 If, like Balarāma and Janārdana-Krishna,
Karṇa and Arjuna become one,
what is there in the world
that they will not be able to do?

11 Surrounded by your five brothers,
Karṇa, shine! –
Like Brahmā on a dias at a mahā sacrifice,
surrounded by the gods.

12 You have all the guṇa-talents,
you are the eldest of my sons.
Don't say you are a Sūta's son.
You are valiant son of Pṛthā-Kuntī."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SIX

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Karṇa heard a loving voice
issue from the distant disc of the sun,
Sūrya speaking out of paternal affection:

2 *Kuntī speaks the truth.*
*Follow your mother's advice, Karṇa.*
*Great good will come if you do so.*

3 But neither the words of his mother
nor the voice of his father
swayed firm-in-truth Karṇa from his resolve.

4 "Kṣatriya lady," Karṇa said,
"I do not agree with you
that to do what you say is the door to dharma.

5 The way you treated me was wrong,
mahā-objectionable.
Because of it,
I suffered, my dignity suffered.

6 Born a Kṣatriya,
I was deprived of Kṣatriya rites,
because you treated me as you did.
What enemy could have done worse?

7 When I needed help,
you showed no compassion.
You deprived me of my *saṁskāras.*
Now you need me,
and you come to me.

8 You never cared for me as a mother.
Now you come to me,
only because you need me.

9 Who does not fear
the alliance of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna and Krishna?
If I defect to the Pāṇḍavas,
will they not say I did so out of fear?

10 Till now, I had no brother.
If, on the eve of battle, I join the Pāṇḍavas,
what will the Kṣatriyas say?

11 The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra have accepted me,
even offered me their pūja-respect.
I have been happy with them.
How can I now desert them?

12 They have declared war;
they need my help, they *namaskāra* me,
as the Vasus respect Vāsava-Indra.

13 They believe that my help
will make them overcome their enemies.
How can I disappoint them now?

14 I am the boat they will use
to cross the vast ocean of war.
How can I abandon them
who have no other hope?

15 Now is the time for Duryodhana's dependants
to show their loyalty,
which I will do,
even at the risk of my life.

16 There are men who accept food and shelter,
but turn into ungrateful scoundrels
when the time for repayment comes,

17 Betray the bread of their masters,
deceive the rājās they once served.
For such rascals,
there is neither this world nor the next.

18 I have chosen the side of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.
I will fight your sons
to the best of my ability, with all my śakti.
I will not lie to you.

19 I know your advice is sincere.
I should show the grace that good men show.
I cannot obey your advice now,

20 But your request will not go in vain.
I promise not to kill on the battlefield
any of your sons
whom I have in my power to kill.

21 I mean Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, and the twins –
all except Arjuna.
In Yudhiṣṭhira's army,
Arjuna alone is my equal.

22 I will kill Arjuna,
and enjoy the fruit of success;
or Savyasācī-Arjuna will kill me,
and that will be a glorious end too.

23 Noble lady, you will have five sons living.
Either Karṇa survives,
or if Karṇa dies, Arjuna."

24 Kunti heard these words of Karṇa
and shook with grief.
Shaking, she embraced him
who stood firm and strong.

25 "Fate is all-powerful, Karṇa.
What you say may well come true.
The Kaurava race is doomed.

26 You have promised the lives of four brothers.
O foe-crushing hero,
remember your promise
on the field of battle."

27 Pṛthā-Kuntī said to Karṇa:
"May you prosper! *Svasti*! Keep well."
Karṇa said, "So be it."
They parted, going different ways.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SEVEN

1 Returning to Upaplavya from Hatināpura
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
foe-crushing Keśava-Krishna reported
to the Pāṇḍavas all that had happened.

2 They had many long discussions –
Śauri-Krishna and the Pāṇḍavas –
after which Krishna retired
to rest.

3 After dismissing the powerful rulers
led by Virāṭa,
the five Pāṇḍava brothers,
after the sun had set,

4 Finished their *saṁdhyā* meditations
with their minds on Krishna.
They invited Dāśārha-Krishna
and held another conference.

5 "Lotus-eyed Krishna," began Yudhiṣṭhira,
"inform us
all that you said to Duryodhana
in Nāgapura-Hastināpura."

6 "In the Nāgapura sabhā, I spoke to Duryodhana,"
replied Krishna,
"and gave timely, truthful, and useful advice.
The scoundrels did not listen."

7 Yudhiṣṭhira, asked: "Hṛṣīkeśa-Krsihna,
what did the eldest Kaurava,
our Pitāmaha grandfather, tell malice-motivated
and stubborn Duryodhana?

8 What did ācārya Drona, Bharadvāja's son, say,
O mahā-fortune-favoured Krishna?
What did father Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and mother Gāndhārī say?

9 What did our uncle, wise-in-dharma Kṣattā-Vidura
say to Duryodhana?
Vidura grieves for us
as he would for his sons.

10 What did all the kings
sitting in the sabhā say?
Repeat to us, exactly, Janārdana-Krishna,
what transpired.

11 You have already reported to us
what the leaders
of the Kuru assembly
said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son,

12 Who is a victim of greed and kāma,
who is foolish yet proud,
Keśava-Krishna, and who does not listen
to their advice.

13 *Tāta*! You are our guru, our lord,
and our friend, Govinda-Krishna.
Tell us everything again, advise us
so that no chance may be missed
to prevent
the coming calamity."

14 "Listen, O Indra-among-rājās," said Krishna.
"These are the words
I spoke to Duryodhana
in the sabhā of the rājās.

15 But Suyodhana-Duryodhana, son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
laughed them away,
which roused the anger of Bhīṣma,
who exclaimed:

16 'Duryodhana, listen to me,
I speak for the good of my race,
hoping that you will help
your race.

17 *Tāta*, my child, my father was Śāntanu,
most famous of those who have sons.
I was, O rājā,
an only son.

18 He thought:
*I must father a second son,*
*for the wise say that one son*
*is no son at all.*

19 *I must not risk the family name*
*to become extinct.*
Sensing his desire, I accepted Kālī-Sātyavatī
as my stepmother.

20 I determined, for my father's sake,
for the sake of the family,
never to be a rājā,
to sublimate my sexual desires.

21 My illustrious younger brother
was born to her –
the mahā-muscled supporter of the Kauravas,
dharmātmā Śrīmān Vicitravīrya.

22 My father went to heaven,
and I installed Vicitravīrya
rājā of the kingdom,
with myself as his protector.

23 O Indra-among-rājās,
I managed to find wives for him,
after subjugating many kings.
You know all this.

24 There was the time when Vicitravīrya
fled his capital
from fear of Paraśurāma,
whom I faced in combat.

25 Excessive sex with his wives
let to a wasting disease
that killed Vicitravīrya,
and Indra, lord of the gods,
withheld rain from that kingless kingdom.
The afflicted subjects said:

26 *Son of Śāntanu,*
*We are ruiined. Be our rājā,*
*put an end to the severe drought*
*that oppresses us.*

27 *There are pestilences everywhere,*
*O son of Gaṅgā!*
*It is right that you save the few*
*still surviving.*

28 *End these horrors, O brave one.*
*Rule your subjects with dharma.*
*Save this kingdom*
*in your lifetime.*

29 I knew that the duty
of a good man
is to honour his vows.
I ignored their pleading.

30 Mahārāja, my mother, gracious Kālī-Satyavatī,
my servants, *purohitas,*
ācāryas and other Brahmins,
all deeply learned,
approached me and pleaded before me:
*Be our rājā.*

31 *If you refuse, the kingdom of Pratīpa*
*is ruined.*
*For our sake, O mahā-learned one,*
*be our rājā!*

32 I was deeply moved, I joined my palms
in *añjali,*
and told them of the vow I observed
to respect my father.

33 Repeatedly I told them I was a sex-sublimate.
For my family's good,
I had vowed it. I would not take on
a rājā's responsibility.

34 I did *añjali* before my mother
and said: *Mother,*
*though Śāntanu's son and Kuru-guardian,*
*I cannot*

35 *Break my vow.* I said this to her
again and again, O rājā,
adding: *I made this vow chiefly*
*for your sake.*

36 *I am your slave. Command me today,*
*O son-loving mother.*
I said all this to my mother
and the subjects,

37 I pleaded with the mahā-*muni* Vyāsa,
as did mother,
O mahārāja, urging the ṛṣi
to sleep with my brother's wives

38 And have children by them.
Maharāja, he graciously agreed,
and three sons thus were born,
O excellent Bharata.

39 Because he was born blind,
your father could not be rājā,
so world-renowned mahātmā Pāṇḍu
became the rājā.

40 Because he was the rājā,
his sons are entitled to their share.
*Tāta*! My child, be reasonable,
give them half the kingdom.

41 So long as I am alive,
who but I is fit to rule?
Do not laugh at my words –
we all desire peace.

42 I do not make any distinction
between you and them.
Your father, Gāndhārī and Vidura
hold the same opinion.

43 Listen to the words of the elderly.
Do not reject what I say,
or you will destroy yourself
and the world."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-EIGHT

1 May fortune favour you! (continued Vāsudeva-Krishna)
After Bhīṣma, eloquent Droṇa
said the following words to Duryodhana
in the assembly:

2 "Pratīpa's son Śāntanu always wished
the welfare of his race;
divine-vowed Devarata-Bhīṣma always wished
the welfare of his race.

3 So did truth-loving, self-controlled Pāṇḍu,
ruler of men,
a dharmātmā rājā of good vows
and good intentions.

4 Enhancer-of-dynasty-glory Pāṇḍu
entrusted the kingdom to wise Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and to his younger brother
Kṣattā-Vidura.

5 Establishing never-wavering Dhṛtarāṣṭra
on the throne, O rājā,
Kaurava-Pāṇḍu retired to the forest
with his two wives.

6 Tiger-among-men Vidura accepted
a humble status in the kingdom,
fanning Dhṛtarāṣṭra
with a delicate palm-tree leaf.

7 *Tāta*! Dear friend! The people accepted
the authority of lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra
even as they had accepted the authority
of ruler-of-men Pāṇḍu.

8 After transferring authority to Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and Vidura,
Pāṇḍu, the conqueror of enemy cities,
wandered where he pleased.

9 Vidura, who was dedicated to truth,
supervised gifts, presents,
and the exchequer,
and servants and food supplies.

10 Mahā-energetic Bhīṣma, conqueror of enemy cities,
took charge of policies
relating to war and peace,
and granting aid to rājās.

11 Mahā-powerful Dhṛtarāṣṭra knew,
on the throne,
that he had the full support
of mahātmā Vidura.

12 What right have you to break up
this royal family?
Why not make peace with your brothers
and enjoy the world?

13 Not weakness, not cowardice, not selfishness
makes me say this.
My livelihood depends on Bhīṣma,
not on you, O excellent rājā.

14 Nor, lord of men,
do I wish to depend on you.
Where Bhīṣma is, Droṇa is.
Follow Bhīṣma's advice.

15 Give the Pāṇḍavas half the kingdom,
O foe-crusher.
*Tāta*! Dear one! I was ācārya to you
and to the Pāṇḍavas too.

16 White-horsed Arjuna is to me
like my son Aśvatthāman.
Why talk pointlessly?
Where dharma is, victory is."

17 These were the words spoken by Droṇa
(continued Vāsudeva Krishna).
after which dharma-firm, truth-speaking
Vidura turned
to *pitā* Bhīṣma, and looking at him,
said these words:

18 "Devavrata! Divine-vowed one!
Listen to what I have to say.
You once saved the Kaurava race
from extinction.

19 Do not mock the lament
that I must now make.
What is Duryodhana but a blot
on this race?

20 Yet self-interest makes you follow
his orders.
He is un-āryan, dishonest, ungrateful,
greedy and foolish.

21 He spurns the dharma-and-artha vision
of his father.
Duryodhana's actions will bring doom
on the Kauravas.

22 Mahārāja, act in a way
that will prevent calamity.
You, O mahā-minded one,
have moulded me and Dhṛtarāṣṭra

23 As a painter creates a picture.
Do not now be like Prajāpati
the Creator who makes
only to break.

24 Do not be so casual about the massacre
that is imminent.
Your race is doomed, and your mind is detached,
O mahā-muscled one.

25 Retire to the woods with Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and myself,
or suppress ill-minded Duryodhana
who is bent on wickedness,

26 And stabilise the kingdom with help
from the Pāṇḍavas.
O mahā-powerful tiger-like rājā,
a calamity faces us

27 Which will wipe out all Pāṇḍavas,
Kauravas and rājās."
A heavy heart made Vidura stop.
He visualised the scene,
and began sighing deeply
again and again.

28 Rājā Subala's daughter
Gāndhāri, fearing
the doom of her race,
angrily before the rājās,
said to Duryodhana these words
of dharma-and-artha:

29 "Let the rājās in this sabhā,
Brahma-ṛṣis and others,
pay careful attention
to my charges against
wicked Duryodhana
and his courtiers and followers.

30 Sucession determines
this kingdom's *kula*-dharma,
but you, out of malice
and wickedness, desire
to ruin the kingdom
by adopting injustice.

31 Wise Dhṛtarāṣṭra
is now on the throne,
and under him Vidura
who has far-sighted vision.
How does deluded Duryodhana
supersede these two?

32 Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Vidura
are second to Bhīṣma
so long as he lives;
Bhīṣma refrains from ruling,
being a mahātmā,
motivated by dharma.

33 This invincible kingdom
was Pāṇḍu's, and now
it belongs to his sons;
the inheritance is Pāṇḍu's,
the succession his sons',
their sons' and their grandsons'.

34 The chief of the Kauravas,
wise mahātmā Bhīṣma
dedicated to truth,
is right. For our sva-dharma,
for the sake of the kingdom,
we should follow his words.

35 Let Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Vidura
speak as advised
by mahā-vowed Bhīṣma.
Let all who believe
in dharma, respect dharma
for as long as they can.

36 Let Dharma's you Yudhiṣṭhira
take charge of the kingdom
of the Kurus, supported
by Bhīṣma, Śāntanu's son,
and guided by rājā
Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-NINE

1 These were the words of Gāndhārī
(continued Vāsudeva Krishna);
then Dhṛtarāṣṭra in that assembly of rājās
said to Duryodhana:

2 "Duryodhana, my dear son,
listen carefully to what I say.
Listen to the words of your father,
and you will prosper.

3 Prajāpati Soma, lord of creatures,
was the first ancestor of the Kauravas;
sixth in descent from Soma was Yayāti,
Nahuṣa's son.

4 He had five sons,
all of them excellent rāja-ṛṣis;
of them powerful Yadu was the first,
and the lord.

5 Younger to Yadu was Pūru,
who was our progenitor;
he was the son of Śarmiṣṭhā,
Vṛṣaparvan's daughter.

6 O excellent Bharata,
Yadu was the son of Devayānī,
and therefore the grandson of Śukra,
also called Kāvya.

7 He was powerful and brave,
but at the same time
foolish and proud,
and he insulted the Kṣatriyas.

8 So intoxicated was he with his pride
that he disobeyed his father,
so arrogant he insulted
his father and brothers.

9 Yadu was the world's strongest ruler.
He subjugated all the chiefs,
and named his capital
the Elephant-City.

10 His father Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa,
angry with him,
cursed him and exiled him
from the kingdom.

11 Yayāti also cursed his other brothers
who, equally proud, followed Yadu.
After cursing them,
that excellent ruler

12 Installed his second son Pūru
on the throne.
Pūru was an obedient son,
and the ideal choice.

13 The eldest son can be superseded;
a younger son
can be given the kingdom
for respecting his elders.

14 My father's grandfather,
all-dharma-knowing Pratīpa,
was ruler of the earth
and honoured in the three worlds,

15 Truly a lion among earth-lords,
he ruled with dharma
and had three famous sons,
all with divine talents.

16 *Tāta*! Dear one! Devāpi was the eldest,
after whom came Bāhlīka;
third was Śāntanu, my grandfather,
a patient, steadfast man.

17 Devāpi, finest of rājās,
who had a skin ailment,
was a father-devoted, truth-speaking
mahā-energetic man of dharma.

18 The people adored him;
he was honoured by the good,
and loved by young and old,
by all his subjects.

19 He was compassionate, firm in truth,
committed to the welfare
of all creatures, obedient to his father
and to Brahmins.

20 He was deeply attached to Bāhlīka
and to mahātmā Sāntanu;
all three mahātmā brothers
were close friends.

21 In course of time, the old monarch
made preparations,
as enjoined in the śāstras,
for a royal installation.

22 All auspicious arrangements were made,
but the elders
and Brahmins and important citizens
from his kingdom

23 Spoke up against Devāpi's coronation.
  The exclusion of his eldest son
made rājā Pratīpa
  sad and worried.

24 *He is truthful, he is wise in dharma,*
  *he is gentle,*
*loved by his subjects –*
  *but he has a skin disease,*

25 *And the gods disapprove of an earth-ruler*
  *physically handicapped.*
With these words, the bull-brave twice-born
  dissuaded the monarch.

26 Devāpi noticed his father's sorrow,
  he noticed
his father's desire challenged,
  and he went into forest-exile.

27 Bāhlīka also renounced the kingdom,
  left his father and brother,
and stayed with the family
  of his maternal uncle.

28 O rājā! Ordered by Bāhlīka, renowned Śāntanu,
  after the retirement of his father,
became the rājā
  of the kingdom.

29 Because of my physical defect, O Bharata,
  I too was excluded,
after careful deliberation,
  in favour of noble-minded Pāṇḍu.

30 So Pāṇḍu, though younger, became king,
  O foe-crushing Duryodhana;
after his death, the kingdom goes
  to Pāṇḍu's sons.

31 I was never rājā. How can you,
  a non-rājā's son,
become the svāmī?
  You want to steal another's property.

32 Mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
is the son of a rājā,
so the kingdom is his;
his majesty is immense –
he is chief of the Kauravas
and lord of his kingdom.

33 He is steady in truth,
in control of his senses;
he is wise in the śāstras,
devoted to friends;
he is loved by his subjects,
he is honest in deed;
he is kind to well-wishers,
the lord of his passions,
the protector of people.

34 Forbearance and patience,
simplicity and truth,
*śruti*-learning, humility,
justice and compassion –
are the guṇas of a rājā.
Yudhiṣṭhira has them all.

35 You are neither the son
of a rājā, nor honest;
you exploit all your friends,
you have no humility.
Your plan is to steal
another's kingdom.

36 Get rid of your folly,
return half the kingdom
with all its resources,
and keep the remainder
as sufficient indulgence
for yourself and your brothers."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY

1 Vāsudeva-Krishna continued: In spite of the advice
of Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Vidura,
Gāndhārī and Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Duryodhana remaind a fool.

2 In fact, eyes blazing with anger,
the fool strode out,
followed by all the rājās
whose lives were doomed.

3 He repeatedly urged the thoughtless rājās:
"Go to Kurukṣetra.
Today the constellation of Pauṣya
is in the ascendant."

4 The rulers of the earth marched away
with the armies,
making Bhīṣma their general, exulting,
though victims of Kāla.

5 The Kauravas have assembled
eleven *akṣauhiṇīs*,
led by Bhīṣma,
whose flag has the palm-tree symbol.

6 O lord of the earth!
Act as you should in the present crisis.
What Bhīṣma said,
what Droṇa and Vidura said,

7 What Gāndhārī and Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
every detail of what happened,
I have faithfully reported to you,
O Bharata.

8 I tried every means of conciliation
to restore brotherly love,
O rājā, to prevent the massacre,
to encourage prosperity.

9 When conciliation failed, I tried
to create dissension among them.
I praised your human
and superhuman feats.

10 When Suyodhana-Duryodhana ignored
my attempts at conciliation,
I invited their chiefs
and tried to get them disunited.

11 I displayed the strangest, the fiercest,
the weirdest, and the most inhuman exploits
in order to influence them,
O illustrious Bharata.

12 I scolded the rājās,
I ridiculed Suyodhana-Duryodhana.
I called him a straw of a man, I hoped
to intimidate Rādheya-Karṇa and Śakuni.

13 With cunning eloquence,
I tried to disunite them;
I exposed the dice-game
played by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons;

14 I stressed the possibility of peace,
I offered gifts
in the hope of achieving my mission
of saving the race.

15 I said: "The heroic sons of Pāṇḍu,
surrendering pride,
will accept the authority of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Bhīṣma and Vidura.

16 Keep the kingdom if you wish;
they are agreeable.
Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma and Vidura
have advised well.

17 Keep the entire kingdom to yourself,
give them five villages.
Surely, excellent rājā, they deserve this much
from your father."

18 But wicked-ātmaned Duryodhana
refused them even that share.
I see only the fourth alternative – punishment –
left for these criminals.

19 The lords of the earth have marched to Kurukṣetra,
O rājā, to meet their doom.
This is my report
of what happened in the Kuru-sabhā.

20 Sons of Pāṇḍu! Only war will make them
surrender the kingdom.
They are doomed, and they will doom
the world too.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-ONE

1 Hearing the report of Janārdana-Krishna
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira said to his brothers
in Bhagavān Keśava-Krishna's presence:

2 "You have listened to the report
of what happened in the Kuru assembly,
and the peace-attempts
of Keśava-Krishna.

3 O best among men,
re-structure your armed forces
from the seven *akṣauhiṇīs*
gathered to win the war.

4 Listen to the names of famous heroes
who will lead them:
Drupada and Virāṭa, and Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and Śikhaṇḍin,

5 Sātyaki, Cekitāna, and valiant Bhīma.
These heroes,
our army's generals, will sacrifice their lives
if so required.

6 They are learned in the Vedas,
brave, noble-vowed;
they are tactful, self-effacing,
adept in military skills.

7 They are skilled in all war-weapons,
specially arrows.
Whoever commands the seven divisions
must be an expert

8 Who can withstand the arrow-tipped fire
of Bhīṣma himself.
Sahadeva, delighter of the Kaurava dynasty,
tell me, in your opinion
who is the fittest person
to lead our seven divisions?"

9 "Our friend, linked to us by distress,"
replied Sahadeva,
"illustrious, dharma-knowing,
who helps us recover our share,

10 Powerful Virāṭa, king of the Matsyas,
expert in weapons,
invincible in battle, can face Bhīṣma
and his mahā-chariot-heroes."

11 After Sahadeva had finished speaking
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
eloquent Nakula stepped forward
and had this to say:

12 "In age, in śāstra-knowledge, patience,
noble birth,
in detailed understanding
of all the sacred texts,

13 The man who trained under Bharadvāja,
who is invincible,
dedicated to truth, who challenges mahā-powerful
Droṇa and Bhīṣma,

14 The envy of all the world's rulers,
the finest of generals,
surrounded by sons and grandsons
like a hundred-branched tree,

15 The lord of the earth
whose fierce tapasya
was directed at Droṇa's death,
the hero of our assembly,

16 The excellent ruler of the earth
who acts like a father,
is our father-in-law Drupada.
He should be our general.

17 He will face Droṇa and Bhīṣma without flinching;
this rājā can handle divine weapons,
he was once
Droṇa's loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend."

18 Mādrī's twin sons gave their opinions,
after which Indra's son,
ambidexterous Vāsavi-Arjuna, Indra's equal,
said these words:

19 "The divine being who,
by tapasyā and ṛṣi-gratification,
sprang mahā-armed,
with the dazzle of fire,

20 Dressed in armour, equipped with bows
and swords,
in a divine-horsed chariot
out of a mahā sacred fire ritual,

21 The valiant warrior whose chariot
roars like mahā-clouds,
the hero who is lion-muscled,
who is lion-brave,

22 The mahā radiant one who has the heart of a lion,
mahā-powerful,
who is lion-shouldered,
who roars like a lion,

23 That handsome-eyed man
who has sparkling teeth,
cheeks, arms, face, thighs, feet,
and physique,

24 Whom no weapon can harm,
who is a rutting elephant –
that self-restrained truth-speaker
who was born to kill Droṇa –

25 Only Dhṛṣṭadyumna can face the arrows
of Bhīṣma,
which rush like thunderbolts, and sting
like fiery serpents,

26 Which have the terror of messengers
despatched by Yama,
whose fiery thunderbolt-impact
only Paraśurāma can survive.

27 I cannot see anyone, O rājā,
who can withstand
mahā-vowed Bhīṣma except Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
This is my opinion.

28 He should command us,
for he is swift and skilful,
elephant-strong,
and clad in impenetrable armour."

29 After Arjuna finished (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Bhīma spoke:
"Perfected mortals and ṛṣis declare
that Śikhaṇḍin, Drupada's son,
was born solely
to kill Bhīṣma.

30 Appearing on the battlefield
with his divine weapons,
he will be the embodiment
of mahātmā Paraśurāma.

31 O rājā! I can think of no one capable
of overcoming Śikhaṇḍin
fighting on the battlefield in his chariot,
clad in armour.

32 No one can kill Bhīṣma in duel
except Śikhaṇḍin.
It is my opinion that heroic Śikhaṇḍin
should be our general."

33 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "Dharmātmā Keśava-Krishna
knows the right and wrong,
the strength and weakness of everyone,
*tāta*, my dear brother.

34 Let Krishna of the Dāśārha race
  name my general.
Young or old, skilled or unskilled,
  he will be appointed.

35 Krishna is the root of our victory or our defeat,
  *tāta*, Arjuna;
our lives, kingdom, success, joy and sorrow
  depend on him.

36 He is the lord and provider, Dhātā-Vidhātā,
  granter of fulfilment.
Let whoever Dāśārha-Krishna chooses
  lead my army.

37 Let the best of speakers speak.
  Night falls,
and we will select our general
  with his help.

38 Before night ends,
  we will march to the battlefield
after the ritual worship of weapons
  and other auspicious ceremonies."

39 Hearing these words of the rājā-of-dharma
  wise Yudhiṣṭhira (Vaiśampāyana continued),
lotus-eyed Krishna said,
  looking at Dhanañjaya-Arjuna:

40 "Mahārāja, in my opinion,
  all these great heroes
named by you are fit to be generals
  of our army.

41 All of them have the strength
  to face your enemies.
Their presence on the war-field
  will make even Indra afraid,

42 Let alone the wicked and selfish sons
  of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
O mahā-muscled one, I am also prepared
  for the coming mahā-battle.

43 I tried my best to bring about peace,
We have met the demands of dharma.
No one now can blame us,
O Bharata.

44 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son thinks he is strong,
but he is weak;
he imagines he is a master of weapons.
He's a foolish boy.

45 Order your troops to form ranks;
war is the only way left.
The son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra will tremble,
when he sees Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

46 And anger-roused Bhīma,
the twins each like Yama himself,
and vengeful Dhṛṣṭadyumna
with his assistant Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki,

47 And Abhimanyu and Draupadī's sons,
and Virāṭa and Drupada,
and other powerful chiefs, each like an Indra
commanding an *akṣauhiṇī*.

48 Our army is powerful and invincible.
I have no doubt
that in the battle we will rout
Duryodhana's forces.

49 It is my opinion that Dhṛṣṭadyumna
be appointed general."
Krishna's words elicited joyful roars
from those excellent horses.

50 A mahā-hubbub; soldiers shouting,
"Get ready!"
Swift running about; everyone exulting,
preparing for battle.

51 Elephants trumpeting, horses neighing,
chariots clattering.
A deafening din of blaring conches
and *dundubhi*-war-drums –
troops forming ranks
like the storm-tossed waves of an occan.

52 Infantry, cavalry, chariots, elephants,
frenziedly rushing;
soldiers shouting – everywhere the mahā-confusion
of a stormy sea.

53 The Pāṇḍavas hurrying, screaming orders;
soldiers running,
putting on armour – everywhere the noise
of war-preparation –

54 Like the Gaṅgā overflowing her banks.
An invincible army,
led by Bhīma and Mādrī's twin sons
clad in armour,

55 And Subhadrā's son and the five sons of Draupadi,
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and the Pāñcālas and Prabhadrakas.
With Bhīma in front.

56 The noise was like the sound of the sea
on Pūrṇimā the full moon;
the soldiers' shouts rose
to the skies.

57 Brisk and cheerful soldiers, dressed
in heavy armour,
with rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, Kuntī's son,
among them,

58 With carts and transport chariots
and other vehicles,
the treasury, armoury, machines,
doctors and surgeons,

59 The convalescent, weak,
ill and the helpless soldiers –
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira took them all,
along with his attendants.

60 The truth-speaking Pāñcāla princess Draupadī,
with other ladies,
stayed behind in Upaplavya
with servants and maids.

61 Arranging for the security of their wealth
by building a wall
and placing sentries,
the Pāṇḍavas left with their army.

62 O rājā! Surrounded by Brahmins,
they distributed gold and cows
on the way. Songs of praise encouraged
their gem-encrusted chariots.

63 The Kekaya princes, and Dhṛṣṭaketu,
and the son of the Kāśī king,
Śrenimat, Vasudāna,
invincible Śikhaṇḍin,

64 Looking cheerful,
heavily-armed and in thick armour,
wearing rich ornaments,
followed behind rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

65 Comprising the rear were Virāṭa,
and the Somaka Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Sudharman, Kuntibhoja,
and all the sons of Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

66 Forty thousand chariots,
five times that many horses,
ten times that many foot-soldiers,
and sixty thousand elephants.

67 Accompanying Vāsudeva-Krishna and Dhanañjaya-
Arjuna were Anadhṛṣṭi, Cekitāna,
Dhṛṣṭaketu and Sātyaki;
they formed a circular bodyguard.

68 Reaching Kuruksetra, ready for battle,
the foe-punishing Pāṇḍavas
strutted like bulls
bellowing their war-challenge to all.

69 The foe-crushing heroes, on Kurukṣetra,
sounded their conches;
Vāsudeva-Krishna and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
also blew loudly on their conches.

70 The thunder-loud roar of the conch
named Pāñacajanya
cheered the hearts of all the soldiers
in the army.

71 Conches and *dundubhi*-war-drums
and soldiers' lion-like roars –
the reverberations shook the earth,
the sky, and the sea.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-TWO

1 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira established base camp
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
in a level, shaded, fodder-and-fuel-provided area
of Kurukṣetra.

2 Bypassing cremation grounds,
places sacred to the gods,
āshrams of mahā-ṛṣis,
and sites of piligrimage,

3 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, mahā-minded son of Kuntī,
ordered the camp
in a pleasing, grassy, open part
of the field.

4 His soldiers, exhausted by the march,
rested briefly,
and then fanned out in hundreds and thousands,
as ordered.

5 After skirmishing with and defeating
hundreds of scouts from Duryodhana's army,
Pārtha-Arjuna and Keśava-Krishna
explored the area.

6 Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and the valiant chariot-hero Sātyaki,
also known as Yuyudhāna,
ordered the site measured.

7 They reached the holy lake Hiraṇvatī,
a site of pilgrimage in Kurukṣetra;
its water was pure,
its bed unpebbled and unmuddy.

8 Keśava-Krishna ordered a trench dug there
for added safety, O Bharata,
and posted a squad of soldiers
with necessary instructions.

9 The rules that were followed in the camp
of the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
were also enforced by Keśava-Krishna
in the camps of other leaders.



10 There were hundreds and thousands of tents,
near-invulnerable,
stocked with plentiful food and drink,
fodder and fuel.

11 There were separate tents
according to rank and hierarchy,
looking, O Indra-among-rājās,
like so many palaces.

12 Salaried artisans were engaged,
as were skilled physicians,
and provided with all the equipment needed
for their profession.

13 Bowstrings, bows, coats of armour,
and other weapons,
honey and ghee, and mountainous heaps
of tree resin,

14 And plentiful fodder and water
for the cattle,
chaff and coal,
were supplied by rājā Yudhiṣṭhira

15 Along with mahā-war-machines,
longbows, lances,
battle-axes, bows, coats of mail,
quivers and breast-plates.

16 Elephants with needle-sharp steel-pointed
coats of armour,
each the match of a hundred thousand soldiers,
were like mobile hills.

17 Learning that the Pāṇḍavas had camped
in that site, O Bharata,
their allies came to join them
from different lands.

18 They had taken the vow of brahmacarya,
they had drunk the juice of the *soma*;
and gifted huge *dakṣiṇās*
to Brahmins.
They marched to ensure the victory
of the Pāṇḍavas.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-THREE

1 When he heard that Yudhiṣṭhira's army
(asked Janamejaya),
protected by Vāsudeva-Krishna,
was marching to Kurukṣetra,

2 Flanked by Virāṭa and Drupada
and their sons,
by the Kekayas, Vṛṣṇis,
and by hundreds of other chiefs,

3 And protected by mahā-chariot-heroes
as Mahendra-Indra by the Ādityas,
what was the reaction
of rājā Duryodhana?

4 O mahā-wise one, tell me this in detail.
I am eager
to know what happened in Kuru-jāṅgala
that ominous day.

5 Those who had assembled would terrify
even the gods,
even Indra himself – Yudhiṣṭhira, Vāsudeva-Krishna,
Virāṭa, Drupada,

6 Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the princes of Pāñcāla,
the mahā-chariot-hero-Śikhaṇḍin
and Yudhāmanyu,
too strong even for the gods.

7 You who are rich in tapasyā,
tell me this in detail –
all the movements of the Kauravas
and the Pāṇḍavas.

8 Vaiśampāyana replied:
After Dāśārha-Krishna had gone away,
rājā Duryodhana said to Karṇa, Duḥśāsana
and Śakuni:

9 "Adhokṣaja-Krishna has failed here,
but he will go to Yudhiṣṭhira
and find ways of angrily instigating him
against us.

10 Vāsudeva-Krishna wants war
between me and the Pāṇḍavas.
Trust Bhīma and Arjuna to believe everything
the Dāśārha tells them.

11 Yudhiṣṭhira is overly influenced
by Bhīma's words –
besides, it is true I harassed him
and his brothers.

12 Virāṭa and Drupada also are hostile
towards me –
and Vāsudeva-Krishna exercises great influence
on them as well.

13 It is going to be a tumultuous war,
a horripilating war.
Make preparations for the massacre
with the greatest skill.

14 Let the earth-lords pitch their tents
in Kurukṣetra –
commodious tents, incapable of being overrun
by foes.

15 Pitch them in hundreds and thousands
near sources of water and fuel,
with an easily maintainable
supply line.

16 Stock them with a variety of weapons,
flags and pennants,
and level all roads leading into
and out of them.

17 Have it announced immediately
that we march tomorrow!"
They promised, "It will be done,"
and the next day,

18 The mahātmā-earth-lords,
happy with the explicit royal order,
made the necessary preparations
for their allies.

19 Inspired with anger, they rose,
leaving their luxurious seats,
and massaged their powerful,
massive mace-round arms,

20 Which shone with golden ornaments
and sandal paste;
with lotus hands they dressed themselves
in lavish robes.

21 The chariot-heroes inspected their chariots,
the horse-riders
harnessed the steeds, and elephant-warriors
readied the elephants.

22 Later, they checked their glittering
coats of mail,
some made of gold, and sorted out
different weapons.

23 The foot-soldiers examined
their war-weapons
and put on protective, gold-plated
coats of armour.

24 That army of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
with cheerful soldiers,
looked like a city celebrating
a festival.

25 The crowds of humans looked
like waves of the ocean;
the chariots, horses, and elephants
were like fishes;
conch-roars and *dundubhi*-drum-beats the noise;
the treasury, the undersea gems.

26 The ornaments were the eddies,
shining weapons the foam,
the tent-clusters were hills,
and chariots the whirlpools.

27 O rājā! The moon of warriors
illuminated the mahā-ocean
of the Kuru rājā –
an ocean dazzling at moonrise!

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FOUR

1 Yudhiṣṭhira recalled the words of Vāsudeva-Krishna
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and asked the Vārṣṇeya chief:
"How could Duryodhana have been so foolish?

2 Tell us what is right for us
under the present circumstances.
Tell us how we are to practise
our sva-dharma.

3 Vāsudeva-Krishna, you have insight into
the minds of Duryodhana, Karṇa, Śakuni,
as well as of myself
and my brothers.

4 You have listened to the words of Bhīṣma
and of Vidura;
you have heard Kuntī's wisdom
expressed in her advice.

5 Recollect and review all the opinions,
O mahā-muscled one,
and tell us frankly
what is good for us now."

6 Krishna listened to the dharma-and-artha
of dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
and said in a cloud-roaring,
*dundubhi*-drum voice:

7 "Your words agree with dharma-and-artha,
they are noble,
but they mean nothing to Duryodhana,
who is a foolish Kaurava.

8 That ill-minded man refuses to listen
even to Bhīṣma and Vidura,
even to me –
he turns us all down.

9 He does not care for dharma, nor for fame;
indeed,
protected by Karṇa, that ill-ātmaned man
thinks all is won.

10 Suyodhana-Duryodhana went so far
as to order my arrest,
but that ill-ātmaned rascal
failed in his attempt.

11 Neither Bhīṣma nor Droṇa objected.
With the sole exception of Vidura,
O unwavering Yudhiṣṭhira,
all agree with Duryodhana.

12 Subala's son Śakuni,
and Karṇa and Duḥśāsana –
these fools made fun of you
in front of Duryodhana.

13 What's the point of repeating
what Kaurava Duryodhana said?
The fact is, he is ill-ātmaned
and he hates you.

14 All the earth-lords comprising your army
together do not have
the hate and utter lack of goodness
that Duryodhana possesses.

15 We do not want peace with the Kauravas
by sacrificing our interests.
It is inevitable –
war is imminent."

16 Hearing the words of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
all the gathered rājās
(continued Vaiśampāyana) looked silently
at Yudhiṣṭhira's face.

17 Yudhiṣṭhira read their minds, and ordered
Bhīma, Arjuna and the twins
to plan the formation
of battle ranks.

18 The order created a noisy flurry
among the soldiers,
but the Pāṇḍava army
strictly obeyed instructions.

19 Realising that a massacre was looming,
dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
sighed again and again,
and said to Bhīma and Arjuna:

20 "I accepted exile to avoid war;
I suffered;
and now the calamity
stares us in the face.

21 What we struggled for, eludes us,
as if we wanted it to escape us.
Mahā-Kali-yuga
is upon us.

22 How do we fight an enemy
who should not be killed,
how do we expect to win
by killing gurus and elders?"

23 Foe-punishing, ambidexterous Arjuna
heard dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
and repeated what Vāsudeva-Krishna
had said to them earlier.

24 "O rājā, you have heard the words
of Kuntī and Vidura
which Devakī's son Krishṇa faithfully reported
to you earlier.

25 I firmly believe that their words
cannot glorify adharma.
I am convinced that we cannot now
avoid bloodshed."

26 Vāsudeva-Krishna heard the views of ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Pārtha-Arjuna;
he appeared to smile, and he said,
"You are right."

27 Mahārāja, the sons of Pāṇḍu
decided to go to war,
and passed that night, like their soldiers,
in perfect happiness.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FIVE

1 The night passed (continued Vaiśampāyana),
and rājā Duryodhana, O Bharata Janamejaya,
went about the rask of deploying
his eleven *akṣauhiṇīs.*

2 He grouped men, elephants, chariot, and horses
into
superior, inferior, average,
and assigned them accordingly.

3 *Anukarṣa*-wood for repairing chariots,
chariot-quivers,
*varutha* tiger-skins for chariots,
miscellaneous javelins,
quivers for horses and elephants,
*śakti*-spears,
arrow holders for infantry,
and massive battle-clubs;

4 Flags, pennants, superlative arrows,
bows and bow-strings;
assorted thicknesses of rope, nooses,
and leather thongs;

5 Plain sharpened sticks,
oil, molasses and heated sand;
pots of poisonous snakes,
lac and other inflammables;

6 Barbed missiles with bells attached;
machines for hurling
boiling molasses, water, and sand;
whistling maces;

7 Poles with thorns and barbs;
devices for spraying poison;
curved clubs, catapults for hurling
fierce *tomara*-javelins;

8 Battle-axes, curved lances, sharp spikes,
barbed iron gloves,
chariots covered with tiger-
and leopard-skins,

9 Splintered wood-weapons, war trumpets;
attacking and defending weapons,
axes, spades,
cloths dipped in oil –

10 Dazzling with golden, gem-covered robes,
swarming with heroes,
the army of Duryodhana seemed
to radiate fire.

11 Armour-clad heroes,
high-born experts in war-weapons,
specialists in horse-combat,
were appointed as charioteers.

12 The chariots carried weapons
and special medical drugs;
they were pulled by horses
with bells on their necks;
their pennants waved; they had shields,
swords, lances and clubs.

13 Each chariot was pulled by four horses,
of the best breed;
each chariot had a hundred bows
and excellent defensive weapons.

14 One driver controlled the centre steeds,
another controlled the two
on both sides;
both were absolute masters of driving.

15 Each chariot was protected like a city,
near-impregnable.
Thousands of these golden chariots
were posted everywhere.

16 Bells, pearls and other ornaments
adorned these war-chariots.
Each elephant, with seven riders,
resembled a jewel-covered hill.

17 Two held the hooks used for driving, O rājā,
two were archers,
two were swordsmen, one held a *śakti*-spear,
one a *pināka*-trident.

18 The army of the mahātmā Kauravas
was a mass of furious war-animals
equipped with all possible war-weapons,
O rājā.

19 It had hundreds of thousands
of horse-soldiers
all dressed in armour, wearing ornaments,
and waving flags.

20 The hundreds of thousands of horses
were perfectly trained,
and would not so much as scrape the ground
with their fore-hooves.

21 Also in that army were hundreds of thousands
of foot-soldiers
of immaculate training,
all encased in gold-plated armour.

22 For every chariot were ten elephants,
for every elephants ten horses,
for every horses ten soldiers
assigned as protectors.

23 The reserve reinforcements consisted
of five elephants for every chariot,
a hundred horses for every elephant,
seven men for every horse.

24 A *sena* was made up of five hundred elephants
and five hundred chariots;
ten *senas* comprised a *pṛtanā*,
ten *pṛtanās* a *vāhinī*.

25 In popular usage, however,
*sena, vāhinī, pṛtanā, dhavajinī,*
*camu, akṣauhiṇī*, and *varūthini*
are often synonymous.

26 This was the system of deployment
of the Kaurava armies;
between them they had eighteen *akṣauhiṇīs* –
seven and eleven.

27 The army of the Pāṇḍavas comprised
seven *akṣauhiṇīs*,
the army of Duryodhana consisted
of eleven *akṣauhiṇīs*.

28 Fiftyfive soldiers make a *patti*,
three *pattis* make a *senāmukha*;
a *senāmukha* is also known
as a *gulma*.

29 Three *gulmas* make a *gaṇa*;
indeed, Duryodhana's army
was made up of tens of thousands
of such *gaṇas*.

30 Mahā-muscled rājā Duryodhana
employed every means
to choose only the finest heroes
as his army's leaders.

31 He appointed each as the leader
of an *akṣauhiṇī*;
then he summoned them,
honouring each separately –

32 Kṛpa, Droṇa, Śalya and Jayadratha
king of Sindhu,
as well as Sudakṣiṇa, king of Kāmboja,
and Kṛtavarman,

33 The son of Droṇa, and Bhūriśravas,
and Karṇa,
Subala's son Śakuni,
as well as mahā-powerful Bāhlīka.

34 He held daily meetings with them, O Bharata;
he personally
attended to their needs,
and gave them repeated pūjā-respect.

35 Because they were given great honour,
the soldiers of these rājās
were eager to do their utmost
to help rājā Duryodhana.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SIX

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
and all the earth-lords
did *añjali* before Bhīṣma, Śāntanu's son,
and said:

2 "What is even the finest army
without a good general
to lead it on the battlefield,
except a confused swarm of ants?

3 Two leaders seldom agree;
even worse are the jealousies
which afflict different commanders
of different divisions.

4 O mahā-wise one, it is said that,
    once, the Brahmins hoisted their kuśa-flag
and declared war
    on the Haihayas.

5 The Vaiśyas and Śūdras helped them.
    The three castes formed one side
and bull-brave Kṣatriyas
    were the foes.

6 In the battle, however, the three castes
    were scattered repeatedly,
and the Kṣatriyas by themselves
    proved to be victorious.

7 The twice-born Brahmins asked the Kṣatriyas
    the reason.
Pitāmaha-Bhīṣma and the dharma-knowing Kṣatriyas
    told them the truth.

8 'When we fight, we listen to one man,
    the mahā-intelligent among us;
but you are disunited,
    each limited to his own ideas.'

9 So the Brahmins selected one general
    from among themselves,
a clever leader, and they did defeat
    the Kṣatriyas.

10 It is obvious that a single general
    totally dedicated to his army
is the right choice
    to win victories.

11 You are the equal of Uśanas-Śukra himself,
    you follow dharma,
you have my good at heart.
    Become our army's general!

12 You are the sun among shining orbs,
    the moon among juicy plants,
Kubera among yakṣas,
    Vāsava-Indra among the gods,

13 Meru among mountains,
Suparṇa-Garuḍa among flying creatures,
Kārtikeya-Kumāra among the gods,
and the Havyavāṭ oblation-carrier among the Vasus.

14 If you protect us, it will be
as if Śakra-Indra protects us.
Even the gods of heaven
will be unable to defeat us.

15 March ahead of us as Agni's son
Pāvaki-Kārtikeya marches,
leading the gods, and we will follow,
like cows following a bull."

16 "What you say, O mahā-muscled Bharata, is right,"
replied Bhīṣma,
"but the Pāṇḍavas are to me the same
as you are.

17 I will indeed tell them what is best
for their welfare, O lord of men,
but since I have promised you,
I will fight for you.

18 I do not see any soldier my equal
in this world
except that excellent tiger-among-men,
Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

19 Arjuna is mahā-intelligent,
he knows how to handle divine weapons –
but he will not fight me
in the open.

20 I can, instantly, with the power
of my weapons,
annihilate men, gods, anti-gods
and rākṣasas.

21 But I will not kill the Pāṇḍavas.
However, I promise, O ruler of men,
to wipe out ten thousand of their soldiers
every day.

22 Perhaps this will lead to their defeat,
O delighter of the Kurus, –
if they do not kill me before my task
is accomplished.

23 I will lay down another condition
for becoming your general. O rājā.
Listen to it carefully, for this desire
must be fulfilled.

24 O lord of the earth, Karṇa fights first,
or I fight first.
That Sūta's son is always boasting
he fights better than I."

25 "So long as Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma lives, O rājā,
I refuse to fight," said Karṇa.
"If Bhīṣma is killed,
I will fight the Gāṇḍīva-wielder."

26 So Duryodhana appointed Bhīṣma,
liberal granter of *dakṣiṇās,*
his commander-in-chief –
and Bhīṣma dazzled when so appointed.

27 *Bheri*-drums were beaten and conches blown
in hundreds and thousands
by enthusiastic musicians
on the rājā's orders.

28 Lion-roars and other shouts rose
from the army;
the cloudless sky rained blood,
and cirmsoned the earth.

29 Earthquakes and tempests
and trumpetings of elephants
were felt and heard,
and the soldiers were grey with fear.

30 Disembodied voices, and careening meteors,
and jackals howling fearfully,
inauspicious omens
foreboding calamity. . .

31 These terrible portents materialised in hundreds,
O king, as soon as
rājā Duryodhana appointed Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma
his commander-in-chief.

32 After the appointment of foe-crushing Bhīṣma,
and generous gifts
of gold and cows
to the best of the twice-born,

33 He marched away,
while Brahmins sang his praises;
he placed Bhīṣma at the army's
and his brothers' head.

34 With a huge army
he marched towards Kurukṣetra.

35 O lord-of-men Janamejaya!
Duryodhana and Karṇa extensively inspected
the terrain of Kurukṣetra,
and settled on a flat stretch

36 In a pleasant, sand-less,
fuel-and-fodder-filled area.
His camp shone with the refulgence
of Hastināpura itself.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVEN

1 "Mahātmā Bhīṣma, supreme arms-wielder,"
said Janamejaya,
"grandfather of the Bharatas,
war-flag of the earth-lords,

2 Equal in intelligence to Bṛhaspati,
strong as the earth,
profound like the sea,
and unshakable like Himavant,

3 Generous like Prajāpati,
radiant like Bhāskara the sun,
arrow-showering exterminator
like Mahendra-Indra himself,

4 Was appointed for many nights as chief-priest
of the war-yajña
of horripilating ferocity.
Hearing of this, what did Yudhiṣṭhira,

5 The mahā-muscled wielder of weapons,
have to say?
What were Bhīma's and Arjuna's reactions?
And Krishna's?"

6 Yudhiṣṭhira,, mahā-percipient in dharma-and-artha
(replied Vaiśampāyana),
especially in crisis, summoned his brothers
and eternal Vāsudeva-Krishna.

7 Then, calmly but eloquently,
he said to them:
"Equip yourselves in armour
and mingle with the soldiers.

8 Our first clash will be with Pitāmaha-Bhīṣma.
Go carefully,
and meet the seven generals
of the Pāṇḍava army."

9 "O bull-brave Bharata," said Krishna,
"you have spoken
the most sensible words possible
under the circumstances.

10 O mahā-muscled one, I thoroughly approve.
Let us do now
what should be done –
let us meet the seven generals."

11 Summoning Drupada, Virāṭa,
Sātyaki the bull-brave Śini,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna the prince of Pāñcāla,
the earth-lord Sahadeva,

12 The prince-of-Pāñcāla Śikhaṇḍin,
Sahadeva the king of Magadha –
all seven mahā-fortune-favoured heroes
eager for war –

13 Yudhiṣṭhira gave them command
of the Pāṇḍava army,
and appointed heroic Dhṛṣṭadyumna
his commander-in-chief.

14 Yajña-born Dhṛṣṭadyumna was fated
to kill Droṇa.
Of the remarkable mahātmās
who had assembled there,

15 Wavy-haired Guḍākeśa-Dhanañjaya-
was made over-all general.
Arjuna's advisor and the charioteer
of his horses

16 Was mahā-intelligent, pulveriser-of-people
Janārdana-Śrīmān-Krishna,
younger brother of Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma.
Anticipating a great carnage,

17 The plough-weaponed elder brother
arrived at the Pāṇḍava camp, O rāja,
accompanied by Akrūra, Gada, Sāmba,
and Uddhava,

18 And Rukmiṇī's son Pradyumna,
and Āhuka's son,
and Cārudeṣṇa and others, happily,
like strong and supple tigers.

19 The mahā-muscled one,
like Vāsava-Indra among the Maruts,
wearing a blue dress,
as imposing as the Kailāsa peak,

20 Entered majestically like a lion,
handsome, with wine-flushed eyes.
Seeing him, the rājā-of-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira
and mahā-radiant Keśava-Krishna

21 Stood up; and so did Kuntī's son,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
and the wielder-of-the-bow Arjuna,
and other rājas.

22 In a body they offered their pūjā-respect
to Halāyudha Balarāma.
Yudhiṣṭhira greeted him,
clasping Balarāma's hands in his own.

23 Vāsudeva-Krishna and the other lords
also greeted him.
Halāyudha-Balarāma honoured Virāṭa, Drupada,
and his elders.

24 The foe-punisher then sat down
next to Yudhiṣṭhira;
Rohiṇī's son Balarāma, looking steadily
at Vāsudeva-Krishna,
said to all the earth-lords
who had assembled there:

25 "Fate has ordained a horrendous
mahā-slaughter of men.
There is nothing that can be done now
to prevent it, I think.

26 All I can hope is that you
and all your well-wishers
will survive the war with no wounds
and no scars.

27 The time has come for the Kṣatriya earth-lords
assembled here –
a mahā-massacre will make the earth
a blood-drenched mire.

28 I said privately to Vāsudeva-Krishna:
'Behave impartially
with those who are equally related to you,
Madhusūdana-Krishna,

29 For Duryodhana is as closely related to us
as the Pāṇḍavas.
Help him also. He has repeatedly
sought your help.'

30 For your sake, however,
Madhusūdana-Krishna rejected my suggestion.
He is committed to your welfare,
specially to Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's.

31 The Pāṇḍavas are sure to win.
That is my opinion,
and I know for certain, O Bharata,
it is Vāsudeva-Krishna's wish.

32 I have no desire to live alienated
from Krishna,
so I will look the other way
while Keśava-Krishna does what he pleases.

33 I have the same affection for Bhīma
as for Duryodhana;
both these mace-experts were at one time
my disciples.

34 I will go on a pilgrimage
to the river Sarasvatī;
I know I cannot remain unmoved
by the massacre of the Kauravas."

35 Saying this, mahā-muscled Balarāma
left the Pāṇḍavas,
gestured Madhusūdana-Krishna back,
and departed on his pilgrimage.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-EIGHT

1 Around this time, there came to the Pāṇḍavas
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
the son of mahātmā Bhīṣmaka, Indra's *sakhā*-friend
also called Hiraṇyaroman,

2 Who was ruler of the Bhojas,
and lord of the south.
His son, famed in all the directions,
was named Rukmin,

3 And he was a disciple
of the lion-brave Kimpuruṣas
on Gandhamādana hill, from whom
he learnt Dhanurveda-bowcraft.

4 Mahā-muscled Rukmin had obtained
from Mahendra-Indra himself
a divine bow which equalled the Gāṇḍīva
and the Śārṅga.

5 Only three divine bows of the gods
were known to exist:
the bow called Gāṇḍīva of Varuṇa,
Mahendra-Indra's Vijaya,
and the magnificent Śārṅga-bow
of Viṣṇu.

6 The foe-paralysing Śārṅga was acquired
by Krishna,
and Pākaśāsani-Arjuna received the Gāṇḍīva
after the Khāṇḍava forest-fire.

7 Rukmin acquired the Vijaya
from Druma.
After sundering the nooses of Mura
and exterminating that anti-god,

8 After defeating Bhūmi's son Naraka,
and recovering
the gem-worked ear-rings and other jewels,
and sixteen thousand girls,

9 Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna acquired the incomparable Śārṅga.
Carrying the Vijaya
whose twang duplicated the roaring
of storm-clouds, Rukmin

10 Came to the Pāṇḍavas
like a terror of the world.
Proud of his strength,
he could not silently tolerate

11 The abduction of his sister Rukmiṇī
by intelligent Vāsudeva-Krishna.
He vowed, *I will not return*
*without killing Janārdana-Krishna,*

12 So that all-weapons-expert pursued Vārṣṇeya-Krishna
with his four-fold mahā-army –
an army which occupied large territories
as it marched –

13 An army that glittered with weapons and armour,
like the overflowing Gaṅgā.
He confronted Vārṣṇeya-Krishna,
who is the *prabhu*-lord of yogas,

14 And was abjectly defeated. So, O rājā,
he did not return to Kundina his capital –
because that killer of enemies
could not kill Krishna.

15 And he ordered a splendid city built
called Bhojakaṭa,
stationing there a massive army
with countless horses and elephants –

16 The hugely famous city of Bhojakaṭa, O king.
The Bhoja rājā
next deployed a mahā-army
with which to protect himself –

17 One *akṣauhiṇī*-strong. Leaving the city,
that mahā-warrior went
to the Pāṇḍavas. Dressed in mail, with sword,
bow and quivers,

18 With a sun-bright war-flag,
he joined the Pāṇḍava mahā-army,
saying his desire was to please
Vāsudeva-Krishna.

19 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira stepped forward
and offered him pūjā-respect.
Receiving from Pāṇḍu's son the pūjā-respect
given to him,

20 He returned the honour,
and rested briefly with his soldiers,
after which, in front of all the heroes,
he said to Dhanañjaya-Arjuna:

21 "Son of Pāṇḍu, if you are afraid,
I am here to help.
My help will be of a kind
that no foe can withstand.

22 No man in this world has the strength
that I have, O Pāṇḍava.
I will wipe out in the war anyone
you wish me to –

23 Even Droṇa, Kṛpa, valiant Bhīṣma and Karṇa,
even all the rulers of the earth
who are now ranged
against you.

24 After wiping out your enemies,
I will give you the earth."
Listening to this in the presence
of Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira and Keśava-Krishna

25 And in the hearing of all the earth-lords,
and other heroes,
keeping his eyes on Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Dharmarāja-Yudhiṣṭhira,

26 Kuntī's son intelligent Arjuna smiled,
and said in a friendly voice:
"I was born among the Kauravas,
specifically I am Pāṇḍu's son.

27 I was the disciple of Droṇa,
I am advised by Vāsudeva-Krishna;
how can I, the wielder of the Gāṇḍīva,
ever be afraid?

28 Brave one, when I fought the mahā-huge
gandharva army
at the time of the Ghoṣayātrā,
did any *sakhā*-friend help me?

29 In that tremendous battle
between the gods and anti-gods
at the time of the Khāṇḍava-fire,
did anyone help me?

30 When I fought against the Nivatakavacas,
when I battled against
the Dānava anti-gods called Kālakeyas,
did anyone help me?

31 When I battled agains the Kauravas
in the capital of Virāṭa,
I ask you again,
did anyone help me?

32 I have honoured, for the sake of victory,
Rudra-Śiva, Śakra-Indra,
Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, Yama, Varuṇa, Agni, Kṛpa,
Droṇa, Mādhava-Krishna.

33 I wield the Gāṇḍīva bow,
I have an inexhaustible quiver of arrows,
I am protected
by divine weapons,

34 So how can I say 'I am afraid'?
O tiger-among-men!
It will shame me before thunderbolt-hurling
Vajrāyudha-Indra.

35 O mahā-muscled one, I am not afraid,
I do not need your help.
You can leave, if you wish,
or stay – as you please."

36 Rukmin withdrew with his ocean-huge army,
O bull-brave Bharata,
and went to Duryodhana,
to whom he spoke similarly.

37 He said almost the same words
to that earth-ruler,
and was refused by Duryodhana,
who prided himself as a warrior.

38 Mahārāja, that is how two heroes
stayed out of the war –
Rohiṇī's son Balarāma of the Vṛṣṇis,
and the earth-lord Rukmin.

39 Balarāma went on his pilgrimage,
and Bhīṣmaka's son
returned as I have described.
The Pāṇḍavas held another meeting.

40 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's meeting
of various earth-lords
dazzled like the star-circled moon
in the sky, O Bharata.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE

1 O bull-brave Brahmin (asked Janamejaya),
with their army poised for battle,
what did the Kāla-doomed
Kauravas do?

2 O bull-brave Bharata! (replied Vaiśampāyana)
When the armies were ready for battle,
mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra said
to Sañjaya:

3 "Sañjaya, come and tell me in detail
all that transpired
in the camps of the Pāṇḍava
and Kaurava armies.

4 In my view, strength and skill are vain,
destiny all-important.
For look, I know how war inevitably
leads to disaster,

5 Yet I cannot check my son
to whom folly is wisdom,
and who loves to gamble.
I cannot do what's good for me.

6 I see clearly what is good for me,
but see, O Sūta,
I lose my sense when I come face to face
with Duryodhana.

7 Well then, what will be, will be.
In any case, Sañjaya,
it is a Kṣatriya's dharma to die
on the battlefied."

8 “Mahārāja,” replied Sañjaya, “what you say
is very right,
but it is far from right to blame
only your son Duryodhana.

9 I will speak plainly, O earth-lord.
That man who,
by his own misdeeds, brings calamity
upon himself,
has no right to blame Cosmic Time Kāla
or the gods.

10 Mahārāja, the man who always behaves
contemptuously towards others,
deserves to be punished by them
for such behaviour.

11 O finest of the race of men!
Defeated at dice,
the Pāṇḍavas suffered patiently
because they trusted you.

12 I will tell you in complete detail
what butchery
of horses, elephants, and rājās
is about to occur.

13 O mahā-wise one! After you have listened
to the story
of the world’s destruction,
you may like to conclude

14 That no man is the doer
of good or bad deeds,
that he is an unfree wooden puppet,
an acted-upon agent.

15 There are three conflicting opinions.
According to some,
all actions are performed by Divinity;
according to others,
man is free to choose his destiny;
still others say
all acts are the result of past karma.
Anyway, listen.”

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY

1 The mahātmā Pāṇḍavas (continued Sañjaya)
camped at Hiraṇvati,
and the Kauravas, O mahārāja,
encamped not far away.

2 Rājā Duryodhana established firm base
for his soldiers,
honoured the kings who were his allies,
posted sentries,

3 And ensured the safety of his army,
O descendant of Bharata,
after which he summoned Karṇa, Duḥśāsana,
Subala's son Śakuni,

4 And arranged meetings with other kings.
O Bharata!
The first step of rājā Duryodhana
was to confer with Karṇa.

5 After consulting Karna and his brother Duḥśāsana,
O bull-brave Indra-among-rājās,
Duryodhana also conferred with Śakuni,
son of Subala.

6 Privately he summoned Ulūka, O rājā,
and said: "Ulūka,
son of an expert dice-player,
go to the Pāṇḍavas.

7 Meet them, and tell them on my behalf
in Vāsudeva-Krishna's presence,
'The long-expected event has at last
fully materialised –

8 The world-shaking war between the Pāṇḍavas
and the Kauravas.
Recall the boastful speech that Sañjaya
reported to me.

9 In the assembly, as instructed by you,
your younger brothers,
and Vāsudeva-Krishna! Son of Kuntī,
Kāla is now at hand –

10 Go ahead, and do what you threatened
you would do.
In addition, say this on my behalf
to Kuntī's eldest son:

11 You call yourself a man of dharma,
but you, your brothers,
the Somakas and Kekayas are busily
pursuing adharma.

12 What are you, a monster who wants
to destroy the world?
I had hoped you would secure
the welfare of people.

13 O bull-brave Bharata, a long time ago
Prahlāda chanted this śloka
when the gods annexed his kingdom.
Listen, and prosper.

14 *O excellent gods!*
*You remind me of the cat! How sweet!*
*You fly the flag of dharma,*
*And practise deceit.*

15 Which reminds me – let me tell you
a splendid story
which Nārada once told my father
long ago.

16 There was this wicked, lazy cat, O rājā,
who stood on the bank of the Gaṅgā,
paws upraised,
having nothing else to do.

17 This cat proclaimed loudly to all
the creatures nearby
that it was bent on cultivating
the devoutest dharma.

18 The birds really believed him;
they formed a flock
and began singing his praises,
O lord of the earth.

19 The pūjā of the birds
give the bird-eating cat
the distinct feeling
that he really had become holy.

20 Time passed – some mice turned up,
and saw the cat
intensely involved in wonderful vows
and dedicated dharma.

21 What a mahā-noble task, so splendidly practised!
O Bharata rājā,
they were completely convinced,
and they said to themselves:

22 *We have many enemies.*
*Why don't we make this cat*
*our maternal uncle,*
*and let him protect our old and young?*

23 So they approached the cat,
and they said:
'Grant us your grace
so that we can roam freely.

24 You are our friend,
you are our only refuge.
We place ourselves
under your gracious protection.

25 You are a cat of dharma, dedicated to dharma.
O mahā-wise one!
Protect us, as thunder-wielding Indra
protects the gods.'

26 Listening to the plea of the mice,
O lord of the world,
the devourer of mice replied as follows
to the supplicating mice:

27 'My tapasyā and your protection –
what is the connection?
But because you ask me,
I am pledged to serve you.

28 On one condition – that you obey me.
My tapasyā is so intense
that physically
it has weakened me considerably.

29 I don't have the strength to move about.
Dear ones! *Tāta*!
You will have to carry me daily
to the river bank.'

30 The mice said, 'Certainly.'
O bull-brave Bharata!
Saying so, the mice, young and old,
sought the protection of the cat.

31 The wicked-ātmaned cat, one by one,
devoured the mice, –
you could tell by its belly swelling
day by day.

32 And the mice population fell –
and very fast too,
in proportion to the swelling belly
of the cat.

33 So the surviving mice got together
and discussed the situation.
'Our maternal uncle grows fatter daily,
and we become fewer.'

34 O rājā! The wisest mouse among them,
one called Diṇḍika,
had the following suggestion to make
to the mahā-mice-meeting:

35 'Why don't all of you go ahead
to the river-bank?
I'll follow soon after,
accompanied by our maternal uncle.'

36 '*Sādhu*! *Sādhu*! Excellent! Excellent!'
chorused the mice.
The advice of Diṇḍika sounded
most eminently sensible.

37 The unwitting cat devoured Diṇḍika.
And the mice
held another meeting –
a meeting held soon after,

38 At which an elder mouse named Kolika
had this home-truth to offer
to the miscellaneous assembly
of his mousey friends:

39 'This maternal uncle of ours isn't after dharma –
he's after us.
Root-and-fruit eaters don't pass
furry dung.

40 He's growing gloriously fat every day,
and we become fewer and fewer.
I haven't seen Diṇḍika
for seven or eight days.'

41 Hearing this, the mice fled helter-skelter.
So did the cat.
He ran back, that wicked-ātmaned eat,
to where he came from.

42 Wicked-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira,
your policy is like the cat's.
You behave with your kinsmen
like the cat with the mice.

43 You say one thing, you do something else.
Oh yes,
you flaunt Veda-knowledge and sweet gentleness
before the world.

44 You will be a true man of dharma,
O bull-brave rājā,
only if you give up this hypocrisy
and follow Kṣatriya-dharma.

45 Conquer the earth with physical force,
O excellent Bharata;
give gifts to Brahmins,
and respect the departed *pitṛs*;

46 Work for the welfare of your mother,
    who has suffered for many years;
wipe clean her tears
    with a real victory!

47 You begged five villages from us,
    and I refused,
because I wanted to rouse you
    to anger and battle.

48 It was you who forced us to reject
    scheming Vidura!
Remember the burning of the lac house!
    Come! Be a man!

49 Remember what you asked Krishna to report
    to the Kaurava assembly –
*I am here, O rājā, ready for war*
    *or for peace.*

50 So the time has come, O earth-lord,
    Cosmic Time Kāla is here.
I have seen to it that things work out
    to this purpose, Yudhiṣṭhira.

51 What's more profitable to a Kṣatriya
    than a battle?
You are known as a Kṣatriya
    all over the world.

52 You studied the military arts under Droṇa and Kṛpa.
    In lineage and valour, we are the same.
Yet you scurry for help
    to Vāsudeva-Krishna.

53 Ulūka, say to Vāsudeva-Krishna
    in the presence of the Pāṇḍavas:
'For your sake, for the Pāṇḍavas' sake,
    face me in battle!

54 The māyā-magic which you performed
    in the Kaurava sabhā – come,
assume that form again, and, with Arjuna,
    face me in battle!

55 Illusion and māyā-trickery can frighten some,
but it infuriates the man
who is fully armed
to fight on the battlefield.

56 Oh, we have māyā-tricks too to enable us
to fly in the sky,
dive into the Rasātala underworld,
or enter the city of Indra.

57 I can spawn a multiplicity of forms
in my body –
but that neither fulfils me
nor instils fear in a foe.

58 The Creator alone controls creatures
with his mind-force.
O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna! You said once,
*After killing Duryodhana, son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,*

59 *I will confer sovereign power
on the Pāṇḍavas.*
Sañjaya reported these words of yours
faithfully to me.

60 You added: *You dare fight Savyasācī-Arjuna
whom I help!*
Don't deny the truth now –
be brave, help the Pāṇḍavas now!

61 Fight for them like a man –
let's see what happens.
The man who gauges his enemy's power,
and fights bravely,

62 And vanquishes his enemy –
that man truly lives.
You have a mahā-reputation, Krishna,
in the world,

63 But now they'll see that some oxen
have horns yet are impotent.
A king like me should never stoop
to fight with the likes of you –

64 I dress up in armour
to battle a slave of Kaṁsa!'
To that idiotic, gluttonous,
muddle-headed fool,

65 Say, Ulūka, on my behalf –
to that rascal Bhīma:
'Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,
in Virāṭa's city you were a cook

66 Called Ballava.
My manliness reduced you to that!
Don't forswear now the promise you made
in the Kuru-sabhā!

67 If you can, drink Duḥśāsana's blood!
Son of Kuntī,
remember what you said,
*In battle Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons*

68 *Will perish at my hands.*
Well, now the time has come.
There will be plenty of meat now –
and drink, O Bharata.

69 But cooking is one thing, and fighting another.
Come, fight! Be a man!
You may find yourself lying dead
on the battlefield, O Bharata.

70 Wolf-waisted one, all you did was rant
in the sabhā, that's all.'
And to Nakula, on my behalf, Ulūka,
say: 'O Bharata descendant!

71 Fight, Nakula, fight on!
Show your love for Yudhiṣṭhira,
your hatred for Duryodhana,
your heroic manliness!
Avenge the tribulations
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī had to face!'

72 And say this to Sahadeva
in that gathering of rajas:
'Son of Pāṇḍu, swallow your humiliation,
and start fighting!'

73 To Drupada and Virāṭa
say this on my behalf:
'Ever since the world's creation,
even the most talented menials

74 Have failed to appreciate their masters,
and masters their menials.
Fools, you have the idea I am useless,
so you fight me!

75 Very well, unite, come, all of you,
fight against me!
Serve your masters the Pāṇḍavas, kill me,
and gain your ends!'

76 To Dhṛṣṭadyumna, prince of Pāñcāla,
say this:
'The time has come
when you must face the truth –

77 Fight Droṇa, if that is best for you.
So fight with the help of your allies,
and work out
your fearful karma.'

78 Ulūka, go to Śikhaṇḍin and tell him
on my behalf:
'Mahā-muscled Bhīṣma will not harm you
in any way –

79 For Gaṅgā's son considers you a woman.
So fight freely!
There's nothing to fear. Show your manliness
on the battlefield.' "

80 Rājā Duryodhana laughed out loudly,
and said to Ulūka:
"On my behalf say this to Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
in Vāsudeva-Krishna's presence:

81 'Either kill us and rule the world,
or be killed,
and sleep the peaceful sleep
of the true hero.

82 But be a man! Remember the wound
of being exiled from your kingdom,
your forest-stay,
Krishna's inconvenience.

83 Everything for which a Kṣatriya lady
gives birth to a son is here –
strength, bravery, heroism, professional skill
in handling weapons,

84 And manliness. Prove them in battle,
and be content.
Himiliated, depressed and exiled
all this time,
poverty-stricken, who would not give in
to pessimism?

85 Which highborn man is there who,
respecting others' wealth,
would not resent losing a kingdom
he thinks is his birthright?

86 Put all your mahā-promises in practice
if you can.
Who's more worthless
than a do-nothing loud-mouth?

87 There are only two reasons to fight –
recovery of your kingdom
and recovery of your enemies' territories.
Show your mettle!

88 You lost the dice-game, and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
was insulted in the sabha.
Come then – be a man!
Show some anger!

89 You have lived in forest-exile
for twelve years,
and one year you spent
as a servant of Virāṭa.

90 Think of the crushing shame!
The forest-exile,
the insult to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī!
So, show your manliness now!

91 Where's your righteous wrath?
Hurl it on all those
who mocked you just before you slunk
into exile.

92 Wrath, strength, skill, courage,
knowledge and application of war-weapons –
show them!
Be a man, Kuntī's son! Fight!

93 The chants have been intoned
over the steel weapons,
Kurukṣetra is mud-free,
your horses are fighting-fit,
your soldiers are paid. Tomorrow, fight! –
with Keśava-Krishna's help.

94 Why boast in advance?
You haven't yet confronted Bhīṣma.
Remember the fool who boasted
without even climbing Gandhamādana?

95 You are that fool. Kuntī's son, don't boast.
Be a man!
The Sūta's son Karṇa who's easily angered,
mighty Śalya,

96 And Droṇa who is magnificently powerful,
are all equal to Śacipati-Indra.
Defeat them first,
and then deserve your kingdom.

97 The ācārya who teaches bow-craft,
who is learned in the Vedas,
who is unfailingly devoted
to his soldiers,

98 Is mahā-radiant Droṇa – how can you hope
to defeat him?
I have never heard of the wind
ruffling Meru mountain.

99 But the wind will indeed move Meru mountain,
sky fall on earth,
and the yugas reverse,
if your aims fructify.

100 Is there anyone
Pārtha-Arjuna or anyone else,
who, after fighting Bhīṣma,
still hopes to retain life and health?

101 Is there anyone who walks this earth
who, after drenching
Bhīṣma and Droṇa with arrows,
still hopes to survive?

102 Like a frog in a well,
you fail to perceive
the strength of my rājās –
an invincible band
that shines like the gods –
an army of gods!

103 An army protected
by the kings of the east,
and the west, and the south
and the north; by Kāmbojas,
the Śakas and Khaśas,
the Śālvas and Matsyas,
the mid-country Kauravas,
the Mlecchas, Pulindas,
the Draviḍas and Āndhras,
the warriors of Kāñcī
and numerous others
from neighbouring lands.

104 Deplorable dimwit,
what point is there fighting
an army of elephants,
of numerous races,
an army as vast
as the uncrossable Gaṅgā?

105 I know you have a quiver
that is inexhaustible.
a chariot gifted by Agni,
I know what flags you fly, O Bharata.

106 So fight – instead of mumbling.
Arjuna, you talk too much.
Talk doesn't win battles;
draw up your battle plans.

107 If ends could be gained by boasting,
all would succeed.
Is there ever a shortage of boasting,
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna?

108 Vāsudeva-Krishna's your ally,
your Gāṇḍīva-bow
is six cubits long,
no warrior's your equal.
I know this, and still
I am lord of your kingdom.

109 No one succeeds simply
because he espouses dharma.
What will happen,
is what the Creator wills.

110 While you moaned and wept,
I ruled your kingdom for thirteen years,
and I will continue ruling
after killing you.

111 What happened to your Gāṇḍīva-bow
when you were gambled away,
O Phālguna-Arjuna?
Where was Bhīma's famed strength then?

112 Bhīma's mace and Phālguna-Arjuna's Gāṇḍīva
could not have saved the Pāṇḍavas
at the time, if Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
had not intervened.

113 It was Pārṣati-Draupadī who saved you
from becoming slaves
and doing the tasks
entrusted to the lowest of menials.

114 How did I describe you then?
As seedless sesame seeds.
I was right. Didn't Partha-Arjuna braid his hair
in Virāṭa's city?

115 And Bhīma sweating in the kitchen,
a cook in Virāṭa's palace –
O Kaunteya-Arjuna,
I take the credit for that!

116 And you, as hermaphrodite, with long hair,
with hip chains and waist bands,
reduced to giving
dancing lessons to girls.
Fit Kṣatriya punishment
for a cowardly Kṣatriya!

117 No, it is not fear of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
nor fear of Phālguna-Arjuna,
will make me return the kingdom,
Fight, with Keśava-Krishna's help!

118 Deceit, māyā, trickery –
nothing frightens the man
who is determined to fight.
All these only rouse him further.

119 I never fight uselessly. A thousand Vāsudeva-Krishnas,
a hundred Phālguna-Arjunas
will scatter from me in battle
in all the ten directions.

120 Fight Bhīṣma, or batter your head
against a mountain –
it's the same. Swim with two arms
in the vast ocean

121 Where Śāradvata-Kṛpa is the mahā-fish,
Viviṁśati the mahā-snake,
Bṛhadbala the mahā-whirlpool,
Bhūriśravas the *timiṅgila*-whale,

122 Bhīṣma the heaving billows,
Droṇa the fearsome shark,
Karṇa and Śalya the other sea-creatures,
Sudakṣiṇa the underwater-fire,

123 Duḥśāsana the waves,
and Śala the fish-shoals,
Suṣeṇa the *makara*,
Citrāyudha also;
Jayadratha the reefs,
Purumitra the gulfs,
Durmarṣaṇa the foam,
and Śakuni the steep
plunging waterfalls.

124 Inexhaustible weapons
are the waves of the ocean
that render unconscious
the finest of swimmers.
You will learn to repent
when you jump in this ocean.

125 Arjuna! Your mind
will abandon all hope,
like an infamous criminal
with no chance of heaven.
For you to attain
a kingdom's as difficult
as heaven for him
who has never attempted
the slightest tapasyā."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-ONE

1 The gambler's son Ulūka (Sañjaya continued)
reached the camp
of the Pāṇḍavas in Kurukṣetra,
and said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

2 "I am only an envoy: my words are not mine.
Do not be angry with me
for saying what Duryodhana
wants me to say."

3 "Do not fear, Ulūka," replied Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Tell us whatever
greedy and short-sighted Duryodhana
has ordered you."

4 Sitting among the radiant,
mahātmā sons of Pāṇḍu,
among the Srñjayas and Matsyas
and in Krishna's presence

5 And also in the presence of Drupada
and his son,
and Virāṭa and other lords of the earth,
Ulūka said:

6 "Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra's mahā-minded son
instructed me
to convey this message to you publicly,
'Listen, Yudhiṣṭhira.

7 You lost the dice-game,
you were insulted in the sabhā.
Come then – be a man!
Show some anger!

8 You have lived in forest-exile
for twelve years,
and one year you spent as a servant
of Virāṭa.

9 Think of the shame of Draupadī!
Think of the loss of kingdom,
think of the exile –
and be a man!

10 Pāṇḍu's son, now is the time to fulfil
Bhīma's vow
to drink Duḥśāsana's blood –
that is, if Bhīma dares.

11 The chants have been intoned
over the steel weapons,
Kurukṣetra is mud-free,
your horses are fighting-fit,
your soldiers are paid. Tomorrow, fight! –
with Keśava-Krishna's help.

12 Why boast in advance?
You haven't yet confronted Bhīṣma.
Remember the fool who boasted
without even climbing Gandhamādana?

13 You are that fool. Kuntī's son, don't boast.
    Be a man!
The Sūta's son Karṇa, who's easily angered,
    mighty Śalya,

14 And Droṇa who is magnificently powerful,
    are all equal to Indra.
Defeat them first,
    and then deserve your kingdom.

15 The ācārya who teaches bow-craft,
    who is learned in the Vedas,
who is unfailingly devoted
    to his soldiers,

16 Is mahā-radiant Droṇa – how can you hope
    to defeat him?
I have never heard of the wind
    ruffling Meru mountain.

17 But the wind will indeed move Meru mountain,
    sky fall on earth,
and the yugas reverse,
    if *your* aims fructify.

18 Is there anyone,
    Pārtha-Arjuna or anyone else,
who after fighting Bhīṣma,
    still hopes to retain life and health?

19 Is there anyone who walks this earth
    who, after battling
Bhīṣma and Droṇa with arrows,
    still hopes to survive?

20 Like a frog in a well,
    you fail to perceive
        the strength of my rājās –
an invincible band
    that shines like the gods –
        an army of gods!

21 An army protected
by the kings of the east,
and the west, and the south,
and the north; by Kāmbojas,
the Śakas and Khaśas,
the Śālvas and Matsyas,
the mid-country Kauravas,
the Mlecchas, Pulindas,
the Draviḍas and Āndhras,
the warriors of Kāñci
and numerous others
from neighbouring lands.

22 Deplorable dimwit,
what point is there fighting
an army of elephants,
of numerous races,
an army as vast
as the uncrossable Gaṅgā?' "

23 Ulūka repeated this to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
son of Dharma;
he paused, then, turning to Jiṣṇu-Arjuna,
he said:

24 " 'So fight – instead of mumbling.
Arjuna, you prattle too much.
Talk doesn't win battles;
draw up your battle plans.

25 If ends could be gained by boasting,
all would succeed.
Is there ever a shortage of boasting,
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna?

26 Vāsudeva-Krishna's your ally,
your Gāṇḍīva-bow
is six cubits long,
no warrior's your equal.
I know this, and still
I am lord of your kingdom.

27 No one succeeds simply
because he espouses dharma.
What will happen
is what the Creator wills.

28 While you moaned and wept,
I ruled your kingdom for thirteen years,
and I will continue ruling
after killing you.

29 What happened to your Gāṇḍīva-bow
when you were gambled away,
O Phālguna-Arjuna?
Where was Bhīma's famed strength then?

30 Bhīma's mace and Phālguna-Arjuna's Gāṇḍīva
could not have saved the Pāṇḍavas
at that time, if Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
had not intervened.

31 It was Pārṣatī-Draupadī who saved you from
becoming slaves
and doing the tasks
entrusted to the lowest of menials.

32 How did I describe you then?
As seedless sesame seeds.
I was right. Didn't Partha-Arjuna braid his air
in Virāṭa's city?

33 And Bhīma sweating in the kitchen,
a cook in Virāṭa's palace –
O Kaunṭeya-Arjuna,
I take the credit for that!

34 And you, as hermaphrodite, with long hair,
with hip chains and waist bands,
reduced to giving
dancing lessons to girls.
Fit Kṣatriya punishment
for a cowardly Kṣatriya!

35 No, it is not fear of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
nor fear of Phālguna-Arjuna,
will make me return the kingdom.
Fight, with Keśava-Krishna's help!

36 Deceit, māyā, trickery –
nothing frightens the man
who is determined to fight.
All these only rouse him further.

37 I never fight uselessly. A thousand Krishnas,
a hundred Phālguna-Arjunas
will scatter from me in battle
in all the ten directions.

38 Fight Bhīṣma, or batter your head
against a mountain –
it's the same. Swim with two arms
in the vast ocean

39 Where Śāradvata-Kṛpa is the mahā-fish,
Viviṁśati the mahā-snake,
Bṛhadbala the mahā-whirlpool,
Bhūriśravas the *timiṅgila*-whale,

40 Bhīṣma the heaving billows,
Droṇa the fearsome shark,
Karṇa and Salya the other sea-creatures,
Sudaksiṇa the underwater-fire,

41 Duḥśāsana the waves,
and Śala the fish-shoals,
Suṣeṇa the *makara*,
Citrāyudha also;
Jayadratha the reefs,
Purumitra the gulfs,
Durmarṣaṇa the foam,
and Śakuni the steep
plunging waterfalls.

42 Inexhaustible weapons
are the waves of this ocean
that render unconscious
the finest of swimmers.
You will learn to repent
when you jump in this ocean.

43 Arjuna! Your mind
will abandon all hope,
like an infamous criminal
with no chance of heaven.
For you to attain
a kingdom's as difficult
as heaven for him
who has never attempted
the slightest tapasyā.' "

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-TWO

1 Ulūka said before fuming Arjuna
the arrow-words of Duryodhana,
aggravating him as one would
a poisonous snake.

2 Listening to the words
incensed the sons of Pāṇḍu –
they were provoked enough, and the words
made them furious.

3 They stood up, and stretched their arms
in wild display,
and looked at each other with the eyes
of venomous snakes.

4 His eyes red, hissing like a snake,
speechless with anger,
Bhīma lowered his head
and looked at Keśava-Krishna.

5 Dāśārha-Krishna noticed the fury of Bhīma,
the wind-god's son;
he laughed lightly, and said to the gambler's son,
Kaitavya-Ulūka:

6 "Kaitavya, hurry back to Suyodhana-Duryodhana
and tell him
we understand what he says.
What he wants, will happen."

7 Saying this, mahā-muscled Keśava-Krishna
(continued Sañjaya)
looked in the direction
of mahā-wise Yudhiṣṭhira.

8 But, in the presence of the Sṛñjayas,
in the presence of Krishna,
Virāṭa and Drupada
and his son,

9 In the presence of all the illustrious
lords of the earth,
Ulūka repeated the message of Duryodhana
to Arjuna.

10 With arrowy words he further inflamed
the smarting snake-angry Arjuna;
then he repeated the words
to Krishna and others.

11 The fierce and wicked diatribe
communicated by Ulūka
so disturbed Arjuna that he wiped the sweat
from his forehead.

12 Mahārāja, the Pāṇḍava mahā-chariot-heroes
and other warriors in that assembly
could not bear to see Pārtha-Arjuna
suffer like this.

13 The insult to Krishna
and mahā-ātmaned Pārtha-Arjuna
made those tigers-among-men jump up
with indignation.

14 Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Śikhaṇḍin,
the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki,
all the five Kekaya brothers,
the rākṣasa Ghaṭotkaca,

15 The sons of Draupadī, and Abhimanyu,
the earth-lord Dhṛṣṭaketu,
Bhīma, and the mahā-chariot-heroes,
the twins, –

16 All leapt up, eyes blazing with anger.
They flexed
and unflexed the muscles
of their sandal-smeared arms,

17 Arms ornamented with pearl-encrusted
golden bands.
Then, gnashing his teeth, and licking the corners
of his mouth, Vṛkodara,

18 Kuntī's son, wolf-waisted Bhīma,
reading their gestures,
bounded forward, like a man possessed
by fierce wrath.

19 He rolled his eyes, gritted his teeth,
squeezed his palms;
with intense passion he said these words
to Ulūka:

20 "Fool, we have heard Duryodhana's message.
It was meant clearly
to infuriate us.
He thinks we are weaklings.

21 Listen to what I have to say to that
faraway one!
Go and tell Suyodhana-Duryodhana
and his gang of Kṣatriyas,

22 In the presence of Karṇa,
and wicked-ātmaned Śakuni:
'To please an elder brother,
we put up with your misbehaviour –

23 Don't you think that was enough lenience
on our part?
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna was entrusted with a mission
and sent to you

24 By wise dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira to make peace
for everyone's benefit.
But you are a fool of Kāla,
you want to meet Yama.

25 Come, then, meet us on the battlefield tomorrow,
and fight.
I have vowed to kill you and your brothers;
I never lie.

26 Don't imagine it can be otherwise.
The great ocean,
which is Varuṇa's realm,
will overflow its shores,

27 Mountains crack open,
before what I vow gets nullified.
Even if Yama, Kubera and Rudra-Śiva
give you help,

28 O wicked-minded one,
the Pāṇḍavas will keep their word.
I will drink Duḥśāsana's blood
as I promised.

29 If anyone tries to prevent me,
as a Kṣatriya,
I will despatch him to Yama's fearful
realm of death.

30 I vowed as much in the assembly
of Kṣatriyas,
and I swear by my ātman
that I will keep my word.' "

31 Bhīma's speech inspired Sahadeva
to angry words;
excited, his eyes flaming,
he said to Ulūka:

32 "Scoundrel, listen to my words
and remember to repeat them,
exactly as I speak them,
to Śakuni, your father.

33 'If Dhṛtarāṣṭra had not given you
moral support,
no quarrel would have risen between us
and the Kauravas.

34 Vicious one, you were born to destroy
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's race
and the world. You are the doom
of your race.'

35 From the day we were born, Ulūka,
your father
conspired against us
and behaved despicably with us.

36 I will stay on the other side
of the sea of malice.
First, I will kill you
in the presence of Śakuni,

37 And then I will kill Śakuni
in front of my archers."
Hearing the vows of Bhīma
and of Sahadeva,

38 Phālguna-Arjuna smiled and said to Bhīma:
"Bhīma, your foes
are determined to wipe themselves
out of existence.

39 They think they are safe,
but death's noose awaits them,
Puruṣottama, best-among-men, don't speak roughly
to Ulūka.

40 It is not his fault – he's an envoy,
only repeating
what others have instructed."
He said this to mahā-muscled Bhīma;

41 Then, to his friends and to the heroes
led by Dhṛṣṭadyumna:
'You have heard the words of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's
vicious son –

42 Filthy language directed at me
and at Vāsudeva-Krishna.
This has roused you,
because you mean both of us well.

43 Vāsudeva-Krishna's protection and your assistance
make me secure
against the entire race of Kṣatriyas
in this world.

44 With your permission,
I will now tell Ulūka
what message he should take from us
to Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

45 'Only eunuchs reply with words.
Tomorrow, leading my army,
I will reply to Duryodhana's words
with my Gāṇḍīva.' "

46 All the earth-lords praised Arjuna;
they were impressed –
all the excellent rājās –
by the dignity of his reply.

47 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
addressing the assembled kings
with due regard to their rank and age,
said gently:

48 "No self-respecting ruler of the earth
can tolerate
an insult to his dignity. You have listened.
Now I will speak."

49 O finest of the Bharatas Janamejaya!
After hearing the message of Duryodhana,
bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira spoke quietly yet firmly
to Ulūka.

50 His eyes were still red, he sighed,
hissing like a snake,
anger still welled up in him,
he licked his lips,

51 He gazed in Janārdana-Krishna's direction,
he flexed his muscles,
he looked at his brothers,
and he said to Kaitavya-Ulūka;

52 "*Tāta*! Ulūka, gambler's son,
go, tell ungrateful Suyodhana Duryodhana,
that wicked-minded blot on his family,
who loathes us:

53 'You have always behaved dishonestly with us.
Wicked one,
the man who depends on his own strength
and faces his foe,
and fearlessly carries out his promises,
is a Kṣatriya.

54 You are a mockery of a Kṣatriya,
because you want us
to fight against leaders
whom we respect.

55 Depend on yourself, and on others
in your employ, O Kaurava;
then challenge the Pāṇḍavas,
and be a true Kṣatriya.

56 What's he but a eunuch
who shelters under others,
and, instead of his own,
depends on others' strength?

57 You have a high opinion of yourself,
but in reality
you are a weakling.
That is why you roar so loudly.' "

58 Krishna said: "Take my message too
to Suyodhana Duryodhana:
'Let tomorrow come, wicked one –
time for you to be a man!

59 Fool, you think that Janārdana-Krishna,
pulveriser of people, as Arjuna's charioteer,
will not take part in actual combat,
so you do not fear me.

60 But I will not allow that to be!
In my fury,
I will consume the world, like the Hutāśana-fire
fiercely consuming grass.

61 Yudhiṣṭhira and mahātmā Phālguna-Arjuna asked me,
so I will act
as the charioteer,
while sense-controlled Arjuna fights.

62 Go beyond the three worlds –
run to the under-world – anywhere –
you will still see Arjuna's chariot waiting
for you tomorrow.

63 You may think that Bhīma
is an idle boaster,
but Duḥśāsana's blood may be taken
as already drunk.

64 Neither Pārtha-Arjuna, nor rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
nor Bhīma, nor the twins
think you of any consequence,
though you rant and shout. ' "

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THREE

1 Sañjaya continued: O bull-brave Bharata!
Duryodhana's message infuriated Arjuna,
and he stared at the gambler's son
with flaming eyes.

2 Then, looking in the direction of Keśava-Krishna,
mahā-renowned Guḍākeśa-Arjuna
flaunted his muscular arms,
and said to the gambler's son:

3 " 'The man who depends on the strength
of his own arms
and fearlessly faces his enemy,
is truly a man.

4 But the worst of Kṣatriyas
and the worst of men
is he who fights
under cover of others' protection.

5 Fool! Being a coward yourself,
you prefer to see others die;
it is easy for you to claim others' prowess
as your own.

6 By making the eldest rājā your war leader –
a mahā-wise, sense-controlled man
who wants others' welfare –
you have ensured his death.

7 Wicked-minded blot on the family name!
We see through you –
you imagined the merciful Pāṇḍavas
would never harm Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma

8 On whose strength you base
all your present boasting.
I will be the first to put an end to Bhīṣma,
O son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.'

9 O son of a gambler,
go to Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
Savyasācī-Arjuna reminds him
that war is at hand.
It will be as he says:
War after sundown.

10 The unfailing hero,
firm-in-truth Bhīṣma,
has taken a vow
to slaughter the army
of the Sṛñjayas and also
the army of Śalya.

11 'I can slay the whole world,
save Droṇa,' said Bhīṣma.
So that is the reason
for Duryodhana not fearing
the Pāṇḍavas – he thinks
the Pāṇḍavas are doomed.

12 'You are foolish and proud.
You are heading for doom.
In the midst of the oldest
of Kaurava heroes,
on the field of war,
I vow to kill you.

13 Be ready at sunrise,
with your chariots and flags,
to protect the truth-speaker,
who is Bhīṣma, for I
with my arrows will shoot
him down from his chariot.

14 Suyodhana-Duryodhana will see Pitāmaha-Bhīṣma
killed with arrows tomorrow,
and he will recall the emptiness
of his boasting.

15 In the middle of the sabhā,
what Bhīma angrily said
to your little-minded, short-sighted,
and scheming brother Duḥśāsana,

16 Who hates me and pursues adharma,
whose mind is filled with wickedness –
that promise, Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
you will see fulfilled.

17 Excess of confidence, display of pride,
arrogance, anger,
abuse, and enmity,
and indulgence in boasting,

18 Violence, and bitter malice,
and contempt for dharma,
practice of adharma, vindictiveness,
acting against elders' advice,

19 Prejudiced views,
and a host of other vicious defects –
you will face tomorrow all their bitter fruits,
O Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

20 Scoundrel! I have Vāsudeva-Krishna on my side,
I am roused to anger.
What chance have you to live
and rule?

21 When Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
Droṇa and Karṇa are killed,
what will happen to your life, your sons' lives,
and the kingdom?

22 When Bhīma confronts you, Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
when your sons are dead,
your brothers are dead –
then you will repent your misdeeds.'

23 That is all, gambler's son.
Tell him I have no other promise to make.
This is the truth.
It will be so."

24 Yudhiṣṭhira added the following message
for the gambler's son:
"Ulūka, remember to give this message
to Suyodhana-Duryodhana:

25 'Don't judge my behaviour by the way
you behave.
The difference between us is the difference
between truth and falsehood.

26 I do not wish to harm even ants
and insects –
why should I desire the massacre
of my relatives?

27 *Tāta*! Dear one! That is why we five brothers
asked for just five villages.
You utter fool, why can't you see
your coming mahā-doom?

28 Kāma and folly have swamped your ātman,
so your boast
and you refuse to listen to Keśava-Krishna's
reasonable words.

29 What's the use of talking now? Fight!
Gambler's son, Kaitavya,
say this to Duryodhana, who is committed
to harming me:

30 'We have understood your meaning.
Let it be as you wish.' "
Then Bhīma said to Ulūka,
the son of a king:

31 "Ulūka, tell that ill-minded, scheming,
wretched man,
that wrong-doing, mean-thinking rascal
called Suyodhana-Duryodhana –

32 'Either stay in the elephant-city
called Hastinā,
or be food for a vulture's stomach.
The vow I made in the sabhā –

33 I will fulfil it – I swear by truth
I will fulfil it!
I will kill Duḥśāsana, and drink his blood
of the battlefield.

34 I will kill your brothers,
I will smash your thighs.
Suyodhana-Duryodhana, I am the doom
on the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

35 And Abhimanyu is the doom of the princes
of the Kauravas.
I will do as I vow, and please you all.
Listen to me!

36 I will kill your brothers, Suyodhana-Duryodhana;
then, killing you,
I will trample your head with my feet
in Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira's sight.' "

37 O earth-lord Janamejaya!
Nakula had this to say:
"Ulūka, say this to Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son:

38 ‘I have received your message, O Kaurava.
So be it.
I will do all that you have advised me
to do. ’ ”

39 Sahadeva too, O king Janamejaya,
said these meaningful words:
“ ‘The high hopes you have, Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
are fruitless.

40 Mahārāja, you now rejoice at our pain,
but you, your sons,
and your friends will soon repent
your folly.’ ”

41 The elderly Virāṭa and Drupada
had this to tell Ulūka:
“ ‘We have always wanted to serve
a good man.
We will now see who’s brave,
who’s slave, who’s master.’ ”

42 Śikhaṇḍin said the following words
to Uluka:
“Kaitavya, tell the vicious rājā
on my behalf:

43 ‘I am a fierce warrior on the field,
O rājā.
Because you rely on his strength
for your protection,

44 I will shoot down grandfather Bhīṣma
from his chariot.
I was made by the mahātma Creator
to kill Bhīṣma.

45 And I will kill Bhīṣma
in front of all the archers.’ ”
Dhṛṣṭadyumna said this to Ulūka,
the gambler’s son:

46 “Tell the king’s son Suyodhana-Duryodhana
on my behalf:
‘I will kill Droṇa, his warriors,
and his friends.

47 That is the task I can do,
which none else can do.
I will follow the illustrious examples
of my ancestors.' "

48 Finally, dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira compassionately
added this mahā-message:
" 'It was never my intention
to kill my kinsmen.

49 Yet this is precisely what will happen.
All because of you, you rascal.'
Go, Ulūka, immediately,
if that is what you wish.

50 Or, if you like, stay here.
Either way, may you prosper!
We are your kinsmen." Ulūka took leave
of Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira

51 And returned to Suyodhana-Duryodhana's camp.
Ulūka approached
the presence of the highly irascible
rājā Duryodhana,

52 And reported, as instructed,
the message of Arjuna,
and the spirited words of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
Bhīma, and dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,

53 As well as the words of Nakula, Virāṭa,
and Drupada,
and the messages of Sahadeva, Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
and Śikhaṇḍin,
and the ultimatum of Krishna and Arjuna –
all in exact detail.

54 Bull-brave Bharata Duryodhana listened
to Kaitavya-Ulūka,
and summoned Duḥśāsana, Karṇa, Śakuni,
and said, O Bharata Janamejaya:

55 "Order the armies to be ready for battle
at sunrise.
Order all the rājās to assemble
on the battleground tomorrow."

56 Messengers, despatched by Karṇa,
hurriedly mounted chariots,
camels, and splendid horses,
to communicate the command.

57 It was Karṇa's command
to all the Kaurava rājās
assisting Duryodhana:
"Be ready for battle at sunrise!'

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOUR

1 After listening to Ulūka (said Sañjaya),
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
began deploying his soldiers
under Dhṛṣṭadyumna's command.

2 His formidable army, powerful as the earth itself,
consisted of four wings –
foot-soldiers, elephants,
chariots and horses.

3 Mahā-chariot-heroes of enormous prowess,
among them Arjuna, protected it;
under Dhṛṣṭadyumna's command,
it was ocean-self-disciplined.

4 Riding in front was the Pāñcāla prince,
hard-to-defeat Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
eager to challenge Droṇa.
He assigned duties,

5 Ordering the chariot heroes
according to rank and ability.
He ordered Arjuna to fight Karṇa,
and pitted Bhīma against Duryodhana,

6 Dhṛṣṭaketu against Śalya,
Uttamaujas against Kṛpa,
Nakula against Aśvatthāman,
Śaibya against Kṛtavarman.

7 He deployed Yuyudhāna of the Vṛṣṇis
against Jayadratha of the Sindhus,
and Śikhaṇḍin
against Bhīṣma himself.

8 Sahadeva was deployed to fight
against Śakuni,
Cekitāna against Śala,
Draupadī's five sons against the Trigartas,

9 Subhadrā's son Abhimanyu
against Karṇa's son Vṛṣaṣeṇa
and other earth-lords, for he thought Abhimanyu
to be even better than Arjuna.

10 After deploying these warriors
to their respective duties,
flame-complexioned bow-expert Dhṛṣṭadyumna
chose Droṇa for himself.

11 The mahā-archer and commander-in-chief,
intelligent Dhṛṣṭadyumna
readied his warriors
and patiently waited for battle.

12 Deploying the leaders as already indicated,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna serenely waited
on the battlefield for the victory
of the Pāṇḍavas.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIVE

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked: "After Phālguna-Arjuna vowed
to kill Bhīṣma on the battlefield,
what did my foolish sons
and Duryodhana do?

2 Pārtha-Arjuna is a brilliant bowman,
and Vāsudeva-Krishna helps him;
I can see Gaṅgā's son, my father Bhīṣma
killed by them.

3 After he heard the vow of Pārtha-Arjuna,
what did Bhīṣma,
the limitlessly wise, supreme bowman warrior,
say?

4 What did the intelligent and skilful
son of Gaṅgā,
the oldest and finest Kaurava, do,
after becoming general?"

5 Sañjaya reported to Dhṛtarāṣṭra everything
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
which the eldest Kaurava,
incalculably strong Bhīṣma said.

6 Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma (according to Sañjaya),
after accepting the army's command,
inspired Duryodhana
by saying:

7 "After namaskāra-ing the god of war Kumāra,
who wields the śakti-weapon,
I will assume charge of your army today.
No doubt of that.

8 I have full experience of handling army
and related matters,
including the deployment of mercenaries
and volunteer soldiers.

9 Mahārāja, I am as expertly versatile
as great Bṛhaspati himself
in troop formations, skirmishes,
and tactical retreats.

10 I know the war strategies of gods, gandharvas,
and humans;
I will stupefy and paralyse the Pāṇḍavas.
Stop worrying.

11 I am what I am. I will fight by the rules
laid down in the śāstras
and lead your army.
Stop worrying, O rājā."

12 “I am not worrying,” replied Duryodhana.
“Son of Gaṅgā, O mahā-muscled one,
to tell you the truth, I fear neither gods
nor anti gods.

13 What cause can there be for me to fear
when I have you
and tiger-among-men, war-welcoming Droṇa
as generals of my army?

14 With you, best of humans, on my side,
I will win, O incomparable Kaurava!
Even kingship over the gods
is not outside my grasp!

15 Tell me, however, about the chariot-heroes
in our army, O Kaurava,
and the chariot-heroes in theirs –
as well as the super-chariot-heroes.

16 As our grandfather, you are acquainted
with all the details.
These lords of the earth and I
are eagerly listening.”

17 “Son of Gāndhārī, Indra-among-rājās,”
replied Bhīṣma,
“learn about chariot-heroes
and super-chariot-heroes.

18 There are thousands, lakhs, and crores
of chariot-heroes in your army.
I will name you
the important ones.

19 In the front rank of chariot-heroes
are your numerous brothers,
and of course you,
as well as Duḥśāsana.

20 You can strike, slice, and pierce;
in chariot-box or on elephant-back,
you can wield mace, sword,
javelin and shield.

21 Your are an expert driver of elephant
and chariot;
you have learnt arrow-craft from Droṇa
and Sāradvata-Kṛpa.

22 The Pāṇḍavas have wronged
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's intelligent sons;
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons will kill
the war-mongering Pāñcālas.

23 And I, as your commander, O excellent Bharata,
will neutralise
first the Pāṇḍavas,
and then kill all your enemies.

24 It is not right that I should praise
my own talents –
you know them anyway.
Bhoja-Kṛtavarman is a super-chariot-hero.

25 He alone can win the war for you,
for he is invincible;
he girips well, and shoots straight
over long distances.

26 He will smite the army as Mahendra-Indra
smites the Ḍānava antigods.
The archer Śalya, rājā of Madra,
is a super-chariot-hero,

27 Who boasts he is Vāsudeva-Krishna's equal
in any battle.
He has joined you, deserting his sister's sons
Nakula and Sahadeva.

28 His arrows like ocean-waves will flood
the enemies' ranks.
The arms-expert Bhūriśravas
has also joined your side.

29 As Somadatta's son, he heads the ranks
of chariot-heroes;
he will decimate the formations
of the Pāṇḍavas.

30 Mahārāja, the Sindhu rājā Jayadratha
equals two chariot-ranks,
and he has promised to play a leading part
in the battle.

31 He was humiliated by the Pāṇḍavas
when he abducted Draupadī –
a slight which he will not forget, O rājā,
at the time of war.

32 After his ignominy, O rājā,
he did the severest of tapasyās,
and obtained a difficult boon
concerning the Pāṇḍavas.

33 This unequalled chariot-hero
will recall the past
and fight the Pāṇḍavas
even at the risk of his life."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SIX

1 "In my opinion, Sudakṣiṇa of Kāmboja,"
Bhīṣma went on,
"equals one chariot-rank.
He will fight for your goals.

2 O excellent rājā, the war-brilliance
of this chariot-hero
will be seen by the Kauravas
to equal Indra's prowess.

3 The chariot-heroes under him
are the fierce Kāmbojas,
who will cover the field
like a swarm of locusts, O mahārāja.

4 Nīla of Mahiṣmatī is dressed in blue armour;
he equals one chariot-rank,
and his heroes
will massacre your enemies.

5 Long ago, Sahadeva made an enemy
of King Nila,
so he has decided to support you,
O Kuru-delighting rājā.

6 The Avanti princes Vinda and Anuvinda,
of tremendous strength
and much war-experience,
are the equal of two chariot-ranks.

7 These two tigers-among-men can wipe out
a whole army
with maces, feathered darts, swords, pipe-missiles,
and hand-hurled shafts.

8 They are bent on war; each will be like death
roaming the battlefield;
they will be two rutting elephants
dominating the battlefield.

9 In my judgment, the five Trigarta brothers
make one chariot-rank.
The Pāṇḍavas, in Virāṭa's capital,
made them their enemies.

10 Like *makaras* thrashing the swollen waves
of the Gaṅgā,
they will spread confusion among the Pāṇḍavas,
O Indra-among-rājās.

11 Foremost among these five chariot-heroes,
O Indra-among-rājās,
is Satyaratha; all five will recall past injury,
and fight bitterly.

12 Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna, Bhīma's younger brother,
harmed them, O Bharata rājā,
on his world-conquering campaign
in his white-horsed chariot.

13 After battling many chariot-heroes,
leaders of archers,
and Kṣatriya-warriors of the Pāṇḍavas,
they will kill their foes.

14 Your own son Lakṣmaṇa and Duḥśāsana's son –
both tigers-among-men –
are not the kind who will run away
from battle.

15 These two princes are young, agile, skilful;
they are versed
in the art of warfare,
and fit to be leaders.

16 These two heroes, O tiger-brave Kaurava,
form one chariot-rank;
they will follow mahā Kṣatriya-dharma
on the battlefield.

17 Mahārāja, that bull-among-men Daṇḍadhāra
equals one chariot-rank –
he will fight for you,
assisted by his own soldiers.

18 Bṛhadbala, the Kosala prince, O rājā,
*tāta*, dear Duryodhana,
is a chariot hero of mahā-prowess,
and equals one chariot-rank.

19 He will delight his admirers with his feats
on the battlefield –
he will brandish awesome weapons
in the service of Duryodhana.

20 Śaradvat's son Kṛpa is the general
of the chariot chiefs; O rājā,
he will sacrifice his life in the process
of killing your foes.

21 He is the son of the mahā-ṛṣi Gautama
or ācārya Śaradvat,
born in a clump of bushes;
he is like invincible Kārtikeya.

22 *Tāta*! Dear me! He will careen through the army
like an all-consuming fire,
annihilating the warriors who brandish
various weapons."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SEVEN

1 “Your maternal uncle Śakuni,” said Bhīṣma,
“is a chariot-hero. O lord of men.
He instigated the Pāṇḍavas, and he will fight.
No doubt of that.

2 His army is hard to defeat in battle.
It has all manner of weapons,
and it swoops down
like a fierce storm.

3 Droṇa’s son, the mahā-archer Aśvatthāman
excels all bowmen.
He is firm of grip and multi-skilled,
he is a mahā-chariot-hero.

4 Mahārāja! His arrows, like the arrows
fired by Arjuna
the Gāṇḍīva-wielder, fly in a straight,
continuous stream.

5 How will I describe
this finest of all chariot-heroes?
If he so wishes, this hero can destroy
the three worlds.

6 He has fury, he has energy –
both increased by his tapasyā
in an āshram. Droṇa has given him
many divine weapons.

7 One great defect in his character,
O bull-brave Bharata earth-lord,
prevents me giving him the title of chariot-hero
or super-chariot-hero.

8 This Brahmin is fond of life,
and wants to live long.
Nevertheless, he has no equal
in both the armed camps.

9 With a single chariot he can defeat
even the gods themselves.
His bowstring twanging against his leatherguards
can sunder mountains.

10 He is fierce and brilliant
he has countless virtues –
he can roam on the field like rod-wielding
Cosmic Time Kala.

11 He is mahā-radiant, he has lion-shoulders.
He blazes
like the fire at the end of a yuga,
making ashes of battling Bharatas.

12 His energetic father is more active
than young warriors;
though old, Droṇa will do mahā-karma.
No doubt of that.

13 The Pāṇḍavas are dry grass that will flame up
when ignited by our weapons –
we will consume them
on the battlefield.

14 Bharadvāja's bull-brave son Droṇa
is the lender of chariot-heroes,
and he will perform horrendous feats
on the battlefield.

15 He is the ācārya and guru
of all consecrated Kṣatriyas.
He will annihilate all the Sṛñjayas.
He loves Dhanañjaya-Arjuna;

16 When he recalls Arjuna's brilliance
and attachment to him,
the ācārya will refrain from killing
that effortlessly excellent Pāṇḍava.

17 Droṇa is proud of the superior qualities
of Pārtha-Arjuna;
in fact, he seems to love Arjuna even more
than his son.

18 With a single chariot, using his remarkable
divine weapons,
he can rout the combined armies of gods,
gandharvas and humans.

19 O rājā! In my opinion, tiger-like rājā Paurava
is a mahā-chariot-hero;
he is sure to spread destruction
in the enemy ranks.

20 He will sweep through the ranks
of the Pāñcāla warriors
with his multitudinous army,
like fire through dry grass.

21 Bṛhadbala certainly has the strength
of a chariot-hero, O rājā,
and he too will sweep through enemies
like Cosmic Time Kāla.

22 O Indra-among-rājās, his variously-armed
mail-clad soldiers
will roam at will on the battlefield,
killing your enemies.

23 Karṇa's son Vṛṣaṣeṇa is another excellent
mahā-chariot-hero;
that powerful warrior will destroy
all your enemies.

24 O rājā! Mahā-radiant Jalasaṁdha
is a chariot-hero;
born among the Madhus,
he will sacrifice his life for you.

25 Specialist in warfare, that elephant-shouldered
mahā-muscled hero
will ride his chariot through hostile ranks,
scattering them.

26 I consider him to be a chariot-hero.
O mahārāja, O finest of rājās,
he will sacrifice his life and his army for you
on the battlefield.

27 He is tremendous fighter,
skilled in all war techniques, O rājā.
He has no fear at all;
he will gladly fight your enemies.

28 Never-turning-his back-on-the-field Bāhlīka
is a super-chariot-hero.
In my opinion, O rājā, he is as brave
as Vaivasvata-Yama.

29 Once on the field, he will not retreat.
He will continue, O rājā,
killing his foes, as ceaselessly as the blowing
of the wind.

30 Mahārāja, your army-leader Satyavān
is a mahā-chariot-hero.
He does wonders on the field –
he will rout your enemies.

31 The prospect of war does not unnerve him.
He will stupefy
all warriors who stand in the way
of his chariot.

32 Displaying his strength against his enemies –
the duty of every good soldier –
this finest of men
will promote your cause.

33 Alambuṣa, that Indra among fierce rākṣasas,
is a mahā-chariot-hero;
O rājā, he will remember his old hatred,
and kill the Pāṇḍava warriors.

34 He's the best chariot-hero of the rākṣasas.
He will sweep
through the battlefield with the strength
of his māyā.

35 Prāgjyotiṣa's lord, the famous Bhagadatta,
is an expert
in chariot-combat
and in wielding the elephant-hook.

36 Long ago, he and the Gāṇḍīva-wielder clashed.
O rājā!
The fight continued over many days,
each struggling for victory.

37 Son of Gāndhārī, it was Bhagadatta who,
because Pākaśāsana-Indra
was his friend, made peace with the mahātmā
Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

38 This elephant-shouldered expert in war
is like Vāsava-Indra,
the rājā of the gods,
astride his elephant Airāvata.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT

1 "The two brothers Acala and Vṛṣaka,"
Bhīṣma continued,
"are hard-to-defeat chariot-heroes
who will rout your enemies.

2 They are strong tigers-among-men
with fixed hatreds;
they are young, handsome and mahā-powerful
princes of Gāndhāra.

3 But this one whom you consider your *sakhā*
who boasts of his warlike deeds,
who stirs you up, O rājā,
against the Pāṇḍavas,

4 This despicable wretch called Vaikartana-Karṇa,
your arrogant advisor,
guide, and friend,
who thinks no end of himself,

5 This Karṇa is neither chariot-hero
nor super-chariot-hero.
He's a fool – he has given away
his natural flesh-earrings.

6 He has parted with his flesh-armour and earrings,
he is so compassionate!
All this has followed from the Brahmin's
and Paraśurāma's curses.

7 In my opinion he is only
half a chariot-hero.
If he challenges Phālguna-Arjuna,
he will lose his life."

8 Droṇa, finest of all-weapon-wielders,
heard this, and said:
"What you say is right.
Your words are never untrue.

9 Before each engagement he boasts,
but invariably retreats.
He is sentimental and confused –
only half a chariot-hero."

10 Rādhā's son Karṇa heard this
and expanded his eyes in anger.
With words like whips
he replied to Bhīṣma:

11 "I am guiltless, yet it pleases you,
*pitāmaha*-grandfather,
to wound me with arrowy words.
You always do this, because you hate me.

12 For the sake of Duryodhana,
I have endured your insults.
You think I am inferior;
you think I am a coward.

13 Surely you are no better
than half a chariot-hero yourself.
It's not untrue to say
that you are dangerous to all.

14 You want to harm the Kauravas,
only the rājā does not know it.
Who else would discourage us
and create tensions among us?

15 It must be that you hate us,
or why should you do this
to illustrious leaders?
Why sow discord in time of war?

16 Neither age, nor wealth, nor relatives
entitles a Kṣatriya
to be classed as a mahā-chariot-hero.
Keep this in mind, O Kaurava!

17 It is strength alone that makes a Kṣatriya,
mantras a Brahmin,
wealth a Vaiśya,
and a life of service a Śūdra.

18 Make your own private list
of chariot-heroes and super-chariot-heroes,
out of kāma and envy
and delusion.

19 Mahā-muscled Duryodhana, you be the judge!
And may you prosper!
Bhīṣma does not mean you well at all.
Dismiss this mischief-maker!

20 For if you don't, O tiger-among-men,
disaffection will weaken your soldiers,
from the highest ranks
to the lowest.

21 Such disaffection is already at work.
The army's morale, O Bharata,
is sapped; it works like a canker
in our very presence.

22 What does little-minded Bhīṣma know
about chariot-heroes?
I singly can undermine the entire army
of the Pāṇḍavas.

23 I am invincible. Let them attack me!
They will scatter in ten directions –
the Pāñcālas and Pāṇḍavas –
like bulls before a tiger.

24 There's a great gap between war, killing,
sweet, useful advice,
and wrong-ātmaned, senile, Kāla-impelled
Bhīṣma's rantings.

25 He has the audacity to say he will fight
the whole universe!
His sight's so blinded he thinks none else
is a human being!

26 The śāstras say we should respect advice
from the elderly,
but this does not apply to the over-elderly
in their second childhood.

27 In a fair fight I can singly destroy
the Pāṇḍava army.
O tiger-brave rājā!
The credit for this will go to Bhīṣma! –

28 Because you have appointed Bhīṣma general,
and it is known
that the leader not the followers,
gets the glory, O lord of men!

29 Rājā, I refuse to take part in the war
while Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma lives.
After he is killed, I will take charge
of the chariot-heroes."

30 "An ocean-huge burden," said Bhīṣma,
"has fallen on me –
a load that I had anticipated
for many years.

31 Sūta's son, the time has come,
horripilating Cosmic Time Kāla is here.
I do not wish to create disunity.
You are alive! –

32 And isn't it true that though you are young
and I am old,
I could, if I wanted, tear you apart,
you son of a Sūta?

33 Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma targeted
mahā-weapons at me,
but they could not harm me.
Who are you to threaten me?

34 Good men do not approve of self-praise.
You blot on your family!
You force me into saying this –
I have lost my temper!

35 I routed the Kṣatriya lords
at the svayamvara-marriage
of the Kāśi rājā's daughters,
and forcibly took away the girls.

36 Thousands of these lords,
all of them highly celebrated,
were vanquished by me at that time –
their armies too!

37 By having a vindictive man like you
on their side,
the Kauravas invite doom. Well, fight, then!
Be a man!

38 Wicked-minded Karṇa, you challenged Arjuna.
Fight him now!
Let me see how you escape
out of this predicament."

39 Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son, famed rājā Duryodhana
said to Bhīṣma:
"Gaṅgā's son, look at me!
You have a mahā-responsibility.

40 Think of only one thing now –
what is good for me.
Both you and Karṇa are destined
for mahā-achievements.

41 Continue with your account
of the chariot-heroes,
super-chariot-heroes and chariot-formation leaders
of the enemy.

42 I want to know all about the strength
and weakness
of my enemy – for the war will begin
at crack of dawn."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-NINE

1 "I have named the chariot-heroes,
the super-chariot-heroes
and semi-chariot-heroes in your army,"
continued Bhīṣma.
"O rājā, let me now assess the strength
of the Pāṇḍavas.

2 Since you are curious to know more
about them, O king,
I will place their chariot-heroes
beside our earth-lords.

3 *Tāta*! Dear one! The delight of Kuntī,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, Pāṇḍu's son,
is a splendid chariot-hero. He will sweep like fire
across the battlefield.

4 O Indra-among-rājās,
Bhīma equals eight chariot-heroes;
in mace-combat and arrow-duel
he is unsurpassed.

5 He is superhuman; he has the strength
of ten thousand elephants.
The bull-brave twin sons of Mādrī
are the equal of two chariot-heroes.

6 They will remember their hard exile,
and they will battle
in the forefront, like the brave
and handsome Aśvins.

7 They will scour the field like Rudra-Śiva –
no doubt of that.
The Pāṇḍava mahātmās are straight-limbed
like śāla-trees.

8 They stand just a little taller
than other humans;
they have the mahā-power to kill lions
if they so desire.

9 They practise tapasyā and brahmacarya;
*tāta*, dear one,
gentle and modest, yet they have the virility
of savage tigers.

10 In swiftness of attack and demolition
they are superhuman.
They subjugated all earth-lords
in their world-conquest mission.

11 No human can bear the impact
of their arrows and maces, O Kaurava.
No human has the strength
even to string their bows.

12 In lifting maces, in discharging arrows,
in shoting straight at targets,
in eating, in playing sports
on dust-grounds,

13 You must have noticed the difference
between you and them
when you were children. These fierce fighters,
facing your army,

14 Will crush it completely. Try if you can
to avoid fighting them,
for each of them is capable of destroying
the whole universe.

15 O Indra-among-rājās, remember what happened
at the Rājasūya!
The slur on Draupadī
and the ugly gambling treatment –

16 They will remember both and scour the field
like Rudra-Śiva.
As for wavy-haired, pink-eyed Guḍākeśa-Arjuna
whose friend is Nārāyaṇa-Krishna,

17 No chariot-hero in either army
is his equal.
Not among gods, nor anti-gods,
nor *uraga*-serpents,

18 Not among rākṣasas and yakṣas –
how then will anyone
be his match among men? There is none,
there will be none.

19 Mahārāja, wise Pārtha-Arjuna's war-chariot
is ready for combat.
Its charioteer is Vāsudeva-Krishna,
and its warrior Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

20 His bow is the divine Gāṇḍīva,
his horses are swift as wind,
his quivers are inexhaustible,
his armour impenetrable.

21 He possesses weapons gifted by Mahendra-Indra,
Rudra-Śiva and Kubera,
and Yama and Varuṇa,
and he has a fearful mace,

22 As well as other wonderful weapons,
including the thunderbolt.
Thousands of Dānava anti-gods
living in Hiraṇyapura

23 Were killed by him, from a single chariot.
Which chariot-hero is his match?
Wrathful, strong-armed, brave,
he will wipe out

24 Your army while defending his own,
so mahā-muscled is he.
I and ācārya Droṇa can withstand
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's attacks,

25 But there is none other, O Indra-among-rājās,
in either army
who will dare check Arjuna
when he fires arrow-showers.

26 He is waiting, with Vāsudeva-Krishna as ally,
to fire arrows
as thick as clouds
after the summer season ends;
he is young and vigorous,
and both of us are worn out."

27 Hearing these words of Bhīṣma
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the rājās dangled their muscular, sandal-smeared
gold-ornamented arms limply,

28 Because they recalled the feats
of the heroic Pāṇḍavas
which they had at one time witnessed.
Their hearts trembled.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY

1 "Mahārāja," continued Bhīṣma,
"the five sons of Draupadī, in my opinion,
are mahā-chariot-heroes.
Virāṭa's son Uttara is a chariot-hero.

2 Mahā-muscled Abhimanyu
is leader of a chariot-formation,
and he is the equal in battle of Pārtha-Arjuna
and Vāsudeva-Krishna;

3 He is agile, versatile in weapons,
brave, and strict-vowed.
He will remember the sufferings of his father
and fight accordingly.

4 Heroic Sātyaki of the Madhus
also leads a chariot-formation.
He is full of righteous wrath,
and he has overcome fear.

5 I equate Uttamaujas also
to a brave chariot-hero, O rājā.
I have the same opinion
about valiant Yudhāmanyu.

6 To further the cause of Yudhiṣṭhira,
son of Kuntī,
thousands of fearless chariots, horses
and elephants will fight.

7 With support from the sons of Pāṇḍu,
O Indra-among-rājās,
they will rush through your army
like fire and storm, O Bharata.

8 Virāṭa and Drupada are invincible
and veterans of war;
both of them are mahā-energetic
mahā-chariot-heroes.

9 They are getting on in years,
but they cherish Kṣatriya-dharma;
they will not waver from the path
trodden by heroes.

10 O Indra-among-rājās, both these mahā-archers
will fight courageously,
because they are tied by the noose of affection
to the Pāṇḍavas.

11 O bull-brave Kaurava! Mahā-muscled men
become cowards or heroes,
depending on the cause
they espouse.

12 O foe-crusher! These two bow-expert earth-lords
have single-mindedly
determined to give their lives
to defeat your army.

13 Each, leading his *akṣauhiṇī,*
will desperately organise attacks;
they will, in conjuction,
perform mahā-feats on the battlefield.

14 They are mahā-archers, O Bharata;
they have surrendered love of life,
and they are bound to perform
mahā-feats."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-ONE

1 Bhīṣma, continued: "The Pāñcāla rājā's son,
city-obliterator Śikhaṇḍin, O rājā,
is an excellent chariot-hero on the side
of Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira.

2 He will transcend his earlier life as a woman,
O Bharata,
fighting heroically among the finest
of your soldiers.

3 His huge army comprises the Pāñcālas
and Prabhadrakas;
with their chariot-formations
he will perform mahā-feats.

4 O Bharata! The Pāṇḍavas' commander-in-chief
is Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
a pupil of Droṇa, a super-chariot-hero,
a mahā-chariot-hero.

5 He will pulverise his enemies
like enraged Bhagavān Pināki-Śiva
who wields the trident
at the dissolution of a yuga.

6 Lovers of the art of war will refer
to his chariot strategy
as ocean-huge and resembling that
which the gods employ.

7 Because he is young and inadequately trained,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna's son Kṣatradharman,
O Indra-among-rājās, is, in my opinion,
half a chariot-hero.

8 Śiśupāla's son, the bow-expert Cedi rājā
named Dhṛṣṭaketu,
is related to Yudhiṣṭhira;
he is a mahā-chariot hero.

9 The rājā of the Cedis Śiśupāla
and his son Dhṛṣṭaketu,
will perform mahā-feats possible only
by mahā-chariot-heroes.

10 Kṣatradharman is excellent at overcoming
hostile cities, O Indra-among-rājās,
and Kṣatradeva can be considered
as a chariot-hero.

11 Jayanta, Amitaujas, and Satyajit
of the Pāñcāla army
can all be considered as mahātmās
and mahā-chariot-heroes.

12 *Tāta*! Dear one! They will fight in the war
like maddened elephants.
Aja and Bhoja on the Pāṇḍava side
are mahā-chariot-heroes.

13 These two will fight with all their power;
they are agile,
versatile in weapons, absolutely dedicated,
and destructive.

14 The five Kekaya brothers
are all chariot-heroes.
O Indra-among-rājās,
they carry blood-red flags.

15 Kāśika, Sukumāra, Nīla,
and the other king Sūryadatta,
as well as Śaṅkha,
who is also known as Madirāśva,

16 Are all great chariot-heroes,
all valiant and talented,
familiar with all weapons,
and, in my opinion, mahātmās.

17 Mahārāja, Vārdhakṣemi I consider to be
a mahā-chariot-hero;
and Citrāyudha also
is an excellent chariot-hero.

18 He is a *bhakta* of diadem-wearing Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
and a gem of a warrior.
The two tigers-among-men
Cekitāna and Satyadhṛti,
are, in my opinion,
the finest mahā-chariot-warriors.

19 Vyāghradatta and Candrasena I consider
as mahā-chariot-heroes
supporting the cause of the Pāṇḍava;
no doubt of that.

20 O Indra-among-rājās, Senabindu
whose other name is Krodhahanta,
and who is the match
of Vāsudeva-Krishna or Bhīma,

21 Will battle against your warriors
with all his energy.
The estimation in which you hold me,
Droṇa and Kṛpa,

22 Should also apply
to that finest of chariot-heroes.
The king of Kāśi is also most versatile
and praiseworthy.

23 He is the equal of one chariot-hero
when subjugating cities,
but on the battlefield he equals
eight chariot-heroes,

24 Drupada's young son Satyajit,
valiant on the field,
the equal of Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
is a super-chariot-hero.

25 He wishes to add to Pāṇḍava glory,
and will act accordingly.
Another great chariot-hero,
who admires the Pāṇḍavas,

26 Is King Pāṇḍya, a warrior
of unsurpassed skill and valour.
He is an expert archer and is certainly
a mahā-chariot-hero.

27 The excellent Śreṇimat and Vasudāna,
both earth-lords,
city-subjugators, and should be classed
as a super-chariot-heroes."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-TWO

1 "Mahārāja," continued Bhīṣma,
"Rocamāna is a mahā-chariot-hero
who will fight against the Pāṇḍavas' foes
like a god.

2 The great city-crusher and powerful archer,
Kuntibhoja Purujit,
who is also Bhīma's maternal uncle,
is a super-chariot-hero.

3 He is a skilful archer
and versatile in various weapons;
in my opinion, he can be classed
as the best of chariot-fighters.

4 His followers are well-known,
and experts in warfare;
he will fight as Maghavat-Indra did
against the Dānavas.

5 He will fight specially to impress
his nephews,
for there is nothing he would not do
for the Pāṇḍavas.

6 Mahārāja! Bhīma's son by Hiḍimbā
is Ghaṭotkaca, lord of rākṣasas,
who leads chariot-formations
and practises manifold māyā.

7 *Tāta*! Dear one! He is addicted to violence
and will utilise his māyā
effectively on the battlefield.
His followers are equally fanatic.

8 These and many other powerful chiefs
of provinces have united
for the purpose of helping Vāsudeva-Krishna
and the Pāṇḍavas.

9 O rājā, I have given you a list
of the enemy mahātmās
who are chariot-heroes, super-chariot-heroes
and semi-chariot-heroes.

10 They will command the fearful army
of Yudhiṣṭhira,
protected by that Indra-like hero,
diadem-wearing Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

11 I will face them and their māyā
on the battlefield,
like them hoping to win in battle
or perish in it.

12 I will fight the chariot-heroes,
Vāsudeva-Krishna and Pārtha-Arjuna,
*cakra*-wielder and Gāṇḍīva-wielder,
like sun and moon together at *saṁdhyā*-time.

13 I will march against the other heroes
in the army
of the Pāṇḍavas when they take up
battle-stations.

14 These are the more important chariot-heroes,
super-chariot-heroes
and semi-chariot-heroes on the side
of the Pāṇḍavas.

15 I will resist and check the advance
of Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Arjuna and of any other lords
whom I see attacking.

16 But I refuse to kill Śikhaṇḍin,
the prince of Pāñcāla,
O mahā-muscled one,
even if he employs weapons against me.

17 The whole world knows that,
eager to serve my father,
I gave up a kingdom
and practised strict brahmacarya.

18 I installed Vicitravīrya
as the royal heir,
and made Citrāṅgada
the sole Kaurava sovereign.

19 I proclaimed my god-vow
among the rājās of the earth,
never to kill a woman
or anyone who was once a woman.

20 Śikhaṇḍin, O rājā, was once a woman.
Perhaps you know this.
Then she went through a sex-change.
I refuse to fight him, O Bharata.

21 O bull-brave Bharata! I am prepared
to kill all the earth-lords
who meet me in battle,
but not the sons of Kuntī."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE

1 "Why, excellent Bharata," asked Duryodhana,
"do you refuse
to kill Śikhaṇḍin even if he is ready
to strike you down?

2 O mahā-muscled Gāṅgeyā-Bhīṣma,
you remarked earlier you would kill
the Pāñcālas and Somakas. Pitāmaha,
how do you reconcile your statements?"

3 "Listen, Duryodhana, and earth-lords,
listen," said Bhīṣma,
"to why I will not kill Śikhaṇḍin
though he harm me.

4 O bull-brave Bharata! Mahārāja,
my father was the celebrated dhārmātmā Śāntanu.
When his allotted time was over,
he left this world.

5 Then, O excellent Bharata, keeping the vow
I had made,
I placed my brother Citrāṅgada
on the throne.

6 But he died too. So I fulfilled
the wishes of Satyavatī
and placed Vicitravirya as the next rājā
on the throne.

7 O Indra-among-rājās, my younger brother,
dharmātmā Vicitravīrya,
dharma-respected me
and put all his trust in me.

8 I was eager to find wives for him.
*Tāta*! Dear one!
I decided to find him the best girls
from the finest families.

9 I heard of three exquisitely beautiful girls,
the daughters, O mahā-muscled one,
of the rājā of Kāśī, and their plans
for a svayamvara –
the three girls were Ambā, Ambikā,
and Ambālikā.

10 All the rājās of the world were invited
to the ceremony, O bull-brave Bharata.
Ambā was the eldest daughter,
Ambikā the middle one,

11 And Ambalikā, O Indra-among-rājās,
was the youngest.
I immediately drove my chariot
to the Kāśī king's capital.

12 O mahā-muscled one! O lord of the world!
I saw the three girls
glitteringly ornamented
among the invited rājās of the earth.

13 I challenged the kings to open duel
and I succeeded
in forcing the girls into my chariot,
O bull-brave Bharata.

14 Knowing that valour was their dowry,
I forced them
into my chariot and shouted
to the gathered earth-lords
again and again: 'Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma
abducts these girls!

15 Free them if you can,
O lords of the earth!
I abduct them in your presence,
O bull-brave heroes!'

16 They rose, brandishing their weapons,
and angrily ordered their drivers:
'Ready the chariots!
Ready the chariots!'

17 They rose, brandishing their weapons,
all those chariot-heroes,
like a herd of elephants,
some on horses, some riding elephants.

18 Then, O lord of the world,
all the earth-lords
surrounded me with their numerous
mahā-chariot-formations.

19 I stopped them with a rain of arrows.
I defeated
all the earth-lords like Devarāja Indra
defeating the Dānavas.

20 My flaming arrows sliced through
their gold-filigreed war-flags,
O bull-braves Bharata,
and I laughed at them.

21 Shooting one arrow at a time,
I destroyed
horses, elephants, and chariot-riders
one by one.

22 Seeing my marvellous skill,
they panicked and retreated.
From a safe distance,
they honoured me with praises.

23 I subdued all the kings and returned
with the girls in my chariot
to the city of elephants,
Hastināpura.

24 O mahā-muscled Bharata! I made over the girls,
intended for my brothers,
to my mother Satyavatī
and explained everything to her."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FOUR

1 "I went to my mother, O bull-brave Bharata,
a Dāśa fisherman's daughter,
mother of heroes, offered her my respects,
and said:

2 'These daughters of the Kāśī king
have prowess for dowry –
I have abducted them after humbling
the earth-lords.'

3 Her eyes filled with tears, O king.
She smelt my head.
Satyavatī smiled, saying,
'Your victory is our good fortune.'

4 When the wedding day, fixed after consultation
with Satyavatī,
approached, the eldest daughter of the king
of Kāśi said shyly:

5 'O Bhīṣma, you know dharma,
you know all the śāstras.
Listen to me, and decide what is right
for you to do.

6 I chose the king of Śālva for husabnd
in my mind,
and he secretly chose me as his bride.
My father did not know.

7 I love another. O Bhīṣma.
Is it not against Kaurava rāja-dharma,
to force such a girl to your home
against her wishes?

8 Decide what is proper in this case.
O bull-brave Bharata,
O mahā-muscled one,
you must make up your mind.

9 O lord of the world, I can assure you
the Śālva rājā is waiting for me.
Free me, O excellent Kaurava!
Let me go to him.

10 Have pity on me, O mahā-muscled one!
O finest of supporters of dharma!
I have heard that you are a hero
who cherishes absolute truth.' "

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE

1 "I placed the matter," Bhīṣma continued,
"before my mother Kālī,
also called Gandhavatī,
before advisers, and *purohitas,*

2 And I permitted the eldest girl Ambā,
O earth-lord, to return.
With my permission,
she went to the Śālva king's capital.

3 She was escorted by elderly Brahmins
and maidservants.
It was a long journey.
They reached the king's palace.

4 She went up to rājā Śālva and said:
'O mahā-muscled one,
I have come to be one with you,
my mahā-minded lord.

5 I love you, rājā, and I am yours
heart and soul.
Take me, as dharma dictates, and treat
me with dharma, O rājā.
I have thoughts only of you,
and you secretly gave me word.'

6 O lord of the earth! The Śālva chief laughed
and said to her:
'Fair-skinned one, you are now another's.
I don't want you.

7 Good lady, go back to Bhīṣma,
who took you by force.
I do not want for wife
a woman taken by force.

8 When Bhīṣma snatched you
from the presence of the kings
and routed them, you did not mind.
You were happy.

9 Lovely lady, I do not want a wife
betrothed to another.
How can a rājā in his senses
accept such a girl?

10 A king must set an example of dharma
to others.
Why do you waste my time, sweet one?
Go elsewhere.'

11 O rājā! Pierced with the arrows of the bodiless
god of love Anaṅga, Ambā said:
'Earth-lord, do not say that.
What you say, was never so.

12 I was not happy to be abducted
by Bhīṣma!
He routed the earth-lords,
and dragged me away, weeping.

13 O lord of the Śālvas, I am innocent.
Accept me!
No dharma ever says that a *bhaktā*
should be turned away.

14 I came to you wasting no time,
as soon as Bhīṣma,
who never retreats in battle,
gave me permission.

15 Mahā-muscled Bhīṣma, O earth-lord,
does not want me;
I am told he abducted me
for his brother.

16 My two sisters Ambikā and Ambālikā
were turned over
by Bhīṣma, Gaṅgā's son,
to his brother Vicitravīrya.

17 I swear by my head,
O tiger-among-men,
I will marry no one but you,
O lord of the Śālvas.

18 I have not come as one betrothed to another,
O Indra-among-rājās.
This is the truth. I swear by my ātman,
Śālva, this is the truth.

19 O large-eyed one, accept me,
a girl who comes to you
eager for your love, a girl not betrothed
to another, O Indra-among-rājās.'

20 But Śālva spurned the daughter
of the Kāśi lord,
like an *uraga*-snake sloughing off its skin,
O excellent Bharata.

21 The lord of the Śālvas, O bull-brave Bharata,
would not be gracious
to the girl who spoke to him
with such deep feeling.

22 The eldest daughter of the Kāśī lord,
tears streaming from her eyes,
her voice choking with grief,
said to him:

23 'Abandoned by you, I go, my lord,
where good people
will give me shelter,
for the truth remains the truth.'

24 O Kaurava! The young girl piteously implored
the lord of the Śālvas,
but he was adamant
in having nothing to do with her.

25 In fact, Śālva said to her repeatedly:
'Go, go away. I am afraid of Bhīṣma.
Lovely-thighed one,
you are now Bhīṣma's.'

26 When she heard these words
of foresight-lacking Śālva,
she left the city weeping, softly moaning
like a she-osprey.

27 Coming out of the city, she thought sadly:
*What young girl*
*in this world can there be*
*with grief like mine?*

28 *Taken away from my friends,*
*and mistreated by Śālva too,*
*I cannot even return to Hastināpura,*
*the Elephant City,*

29 *Because Bhīṣma let me go*
*in order to be with Śālva.*
*Who is to blame –*
*me, or hard-to-vanquish Bhīṣma?*

30 *Or my foolish father who decided I choose*
*my own husband?*
*It was all my fault that at that time,*
*from Bhīṣma's chariot,*

31 *I did not leap down and run to Śālva,*
*while Bhīṣma fought.*
*The bitter fruit is that I have made*
*a fool of myself!*

32 Dhik! *Shame on Bhīṣma! Shame on my stupid father*
*who foolishly decided*
*to make prowess my dowry,*
*and put me on sale!*

33 Dhik! *Shame on me, and shame on rājā Śālva!*
Dhik! *Shame on the Creator*
*though whose fault*
*I suffer so deeply!*

34 *One must accept one's destiny,*
*but in my case*
*it is Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma who's responsible*
*for my plight.*

35 *He is the cause of my sufferings;*
*I will revenge myself on Bhīṣma*
*through great tapasyā*
*or in battle.*

36 *But what king is there who dares fight Bhīṣma*
*in battle?*
Thinking in this manner,
the girl left the elephant city,

37 And went to an āshram
of mahātmā tapasyā-followers;
she spent the night there,
among the venerable hermits.

38 The sweet-smiling girl told them her story
in every detail, – O Bharata –
how she was abducted by mahā-muscled Bhīṣma,
how released by him,
and how she was rejected
by the Śālva king.

39 There was an old and respected Brahmin
named Śaikhāvatya
in that āshram – learned in the śāstras
and Āraṇyakas.

40 That *muni* Śāikhavatya of mahā-tāpasyā
said to the chaste,
afflicted girl who was sighing
in profound grief:

41 ‘But what can be done to help you,
O noble mahā-fortune-favoured lady,
by the holy men of the āshram,
who are mahātmās?’

42 To which her reply, O rājā,
was as follows:
‘I ask only this –
permit me to practise tapasyā.

43 What has happened to me
can only be the effect
of bad karma I foolishly did
in my past life.

44 O holy ones, I have no intention
of going back to my relatives,
because I have been insulted
by Śālva.

45 I wish only to stay here
and learn tapasyā
from stainless god-like you.
O help me!’

46 He consoled the girl by reciting
various examples from the scriptures,
promising he and other Brahmins
would help her.”

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SIX

1 All the holy folk (continued Bhīṣma),
all the dharma-followers
discussed among themselves
how best to help the girl.

2 Some men of tapasyā said:
“Return her to her father.”
Others suggested that the fault actually
lay with me.

3 Some wanted to persuade king Śālva
to accept her;
others turned it down,
because he had already rejected her.

4 The *munis* said to her: "Noble lady,
tell us yourself
what can ascetic, self-controlled men
like us do?

5 Why should you roam in these woods?
Listen to us – and prosper –
it's best that you go back
to your father.

6 The raja will know what is right and,
O favoured and all-talented lady,
you will live there
in happiness.

7 What other shelter is there for you
except your father?
Lovely lady, a woman's refuge is a father
or a husband.

8 When all goes well,
a husband is a girl's refuge;
when ill, her father. Roaming is perilous,
specially for a lovely girl.

9 You are a princess, a delicate girl,
O lovely one.
For you, beautiful lady,
there will be many problems

10 In an āshram, and none at all
in your father's house."
Other tapasyā-followers said
to the would-be girl-of-tapasyā:

11 "Rājās will come and court you
if they see you alone
in these dense woods.
Don't plan on such a life."

12 Ambā replied: "I cannot return
to the city of Kāśī to my father's place;
my friends and relatives
will mock me.

13 O tapasyā-followers! When I was a child,
I lived with my father;
now I cannot go back to his place.
I know you mean well.
My desire now is to learn tapasyā
from men-of-tapasyā,

14 So that I do not suffer similar shame
in my next life.
I am determined to practise tapasyā;
I will do it."

15 While the Brahmins were still discussing
her case,
the rājā-ṛṣi Hotravāhana happened
to come there.

16 All the tapasyā-followers offered pūjā-respect
to that king,
and welcomed him with courtesy, water,
and a seat.

17 After he had sat down
and seemed to be rested,
the forest-dwellers again referred to her
in his presence.

18 The story of Ambā,
daughter of the rājā of Kāśī,
moved that mahā-energetic rāja-ṛṣi to pity,
O Bharata.

19 That man of mahā-tapasyā,
the mahātmā rāja-ṛṣi Hotravāhana,
seeing and hearing her speak,
felt pity for her.

20 Hotravāhana, father of Ambā's mother,
rose, trembling;
then, sitting down, he placed her in his lap,
and consoled her.

21 He made her re-tell the story
of her humiliation
in detail, which she did,
leaving out nothing.

22 The rāja-ṛṣi was filled with grief
and compassion;
that man of pure mahā-tapasyā
decided to act.

23 Still shaking, he said
to his deeply suffering grand-daughter:
"You don't have to go to your father;
I am your grandfather.

24 I will dispel your sorrow, my daughter.
Have faith in me.
Look how thin you are!
How you must have suffered, my child!

25 Take my advice. Go to Paraśurāma,
Jamadagni's son.
Paraśurāma will remove your mahā-shame
and suffering.

26 If Bhīṣma rejects his advice, he will kill Bhīṣma,
Go to him.
That incomparable Bharata is the Kāla-fire
of universal doom.

27 That man of mahā-tapasyā
will show you the path."
Weeping profusely, her tears trickling
ceaselessly,

28 She lowered her head obediently
before her grandfather Hotravāhana,
and said: "On your command,
I will go to him.

29 But will I be able to see
that respectworthy lord
whom all the world honours?
Will the son of Bhṛgu
remove my anguish? Before I go,
I must be sure."

30 "You will see Paraśurāma,
the powerful son of Jamadagni,"
replied Hotravāhana, "in the mahā-forest,
practising tapasyā.

31 He lives on the towering mountain
that is called Mahendra;
gandharvas, apsarās and Veda-knowing ṛṣis
also live there.

32 Go to him – and may all go well.
Tell him from me,
after you have bowed your head
to that firm-vowed hero,

33 Your whole story. Tell him whatever you wish,
good girl.
When he hears my name,
he will help you in every way.

34 My child! He is my loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend.
He wishes me well.
Jamadagni's all-weapons-wielding heroic son
is pleased with me."

35 Even as lord-of-earth Hotravāhana
was saying these words,
the faithful follower of Paraśurāma, Akṛtavraṇa,
turned up there.

36 All the thousands of ṛṣis of the āshram,
including Hotravāhana,
the rājā of the Sṛñjayas,
immediately stood up.

37 Seeing him, the forest-dwellers offered him
appropriate hospitality;
then, all together, O excellent Bharata,
they sat around him.

38 O Indra-among-rājās, they began casually
and pleasantly
discussing matters that were heart-pleasing
and mind-uplifting.

39 After the conversation,
the rāja-ṛṣi and mahātmā, Hotravāhana,
enquired about the health of Paraśurāma
in these words:

40 "Where can I find the illustrious
son of Jamadagni,
that finest of all knowers of the Vedas,
O mahā-muscled Akṛtavraṇa?"

41 Akṛtavraṇa replied: "My lord,
Paraśurāma speaks always of you.
He says the rāja-ṛṣi Hotravāhana of the Sṛñjayas
is his dearest *sakhā.*

42 He is expected here tomorrow. In fact,
you will see him here tomorrow
because you desire a darshan
of Paraśurāma.

43 But who is this girl in this forest,
O rāja-ṛṣi?
Whose daughter is she?
How is she related to you?"

44 "She is my grand-daughter," said Hotravāhāna,
"the rājā of Kāśī's daughter.
She and her two sisters
held a svayamvara.

45 The Kāśī king's eldest girl is Ambā and,
O tapasyā-rich one,
his two younger daughters
are Ambikā and Ambālikā.

46 All the Kṣatriya earth-lords gathered
in the city of Kāśi,
and there was a great festivity
on the marriage-choice.

47 Mahā-valiant Bhīṣma, son of Śāntanu,
routed all
the gathered earth-lords,
and forcibly took away the girls.

[V:176:48-56]

Transcreated by P. Lal

48 Pure-ātmaned Bhīṣma defeated
all the earth-lords, O Bharata,
and took the girls away to the city
of Hastināpura.

49 He presented them before Satyavatī,
and ordered
wedding preparations
for his younger brother Vicitravīrya.

50 Seeing all the preparations completed, the girl,
O Brahmin,
said to Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma
in the presence of the courtiers:

51 'I chose heroic Śālva as my husband.
You know dharma.
It is not right to marry a girl to your brother
when she loves another.'

52 Bhīṣma heard these words,
conferred with his ministers,
and decided, with Satyavatī,
that she should be returned.

53 With Bhīṣma's permission,
she happily went to King Śālva,
rider of the Saubha-vehicle,
and she said to him:

54 'Bhīṣma has released me, because I chose you
for husband earlier.
O excellent bull-brave earth-lord,
treat me with dharma.'

55 But Śālva suspected the purity
of her character,
and rejected her. She came to this āshram,
to practise tapasyā.

56 I recognised her when she was giving
an account of her parentage.
She blames Bhīṣma
for her plight."

57 “Revered one,” said Aṁbā, “*bhagavan*,
he speaks the truth.
My mother’s father is Hotravāhana
of the Sṛñjayas.

58 O tapasyā-rich mahā-*muni,*
I do not wish to return
to my father’s city,
because I will be further disgraced.

59 O excellent Brahmin, *bhagavan,* revered one,
whatever the advice Paraśurāma gives,
I will make it
my duty of duties.”

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SEVEN

1 “Noble lady,” said Akṛtavraṇa, “tell me:
two causes, my child,
are behind your sorrow –
which do you want remedied?

2 If you wish the Saubha-lord be persuaded
to marry you,
then mahātmā Paraśurāma will takes steps
to convince him.

3 If you wish to see Gaṅgā’s son Bhīṣma
defeated in battle
by wise Bhārgava Paraśurāma,
he will ensure that this happens.

4 O sweet-smiling lady, listen to the words
of Hotravāhana,
and tell me what you wish.
Let us decide on it today.”

5 “*Bhagavan*! It’s true I was abducted by Bhīṣma,”
replied Ambā,
“but he, O Brahmin, did not know I was in love
with king Śālva.

6 Keep that in mind when you make
your decision.
Whatever you decide must be in keeping
with justice.

7 O Brahmin, decide on the best justice –
for the Kuru-tiger Bhīṣma
or for the rājā of Śālva,
or for both.

8 *Bhagavan*! I have laid before you
the root of my grief.
It is right, revered one,
that you do what is right."



9 Akṛtavraṇa said, "It is excellent, gracious lady,
that you should speak
with dharma in mind. Lovely-complexioned lady,
listen to me.

10 Had Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma not abducted you
to the elephant city,
Paraśurāma could easily have persuaded Śālva
to marry you.

11 It is precisely, lovely-slim-waisted lady,
the abduction
that has created suspicions about you
in Śālva's mind.

12 Bhīṣma thinks highly of his manliness
and glowing success,
so it follows that you should take revenge
on Bhīṣma."

13 "Brahmin! I have always cherished in my heart,"
Ambā replied,
"the secret desire of killing Bhīṣma
on the battlefield.

14 O mahā-muscled one, punish whoever's responsible
for my suffering –
whether it is Bhīṣma
or the rājā of the Śālvas."

15 Even as they talked, the day ended (said Bhīṣma)
and, O excellent Bharata,
night ended, with its gentle breezes,
not too hot nor too cold.

16 And Paraśurāma suddenly appeared there, O rājā,
the radiant *muni*,
matted-haired and dressed in tree-bark,
surrounded by his disciples.

17 The mahātmā came carrying a bow, sword,
and battle-axe; O tiger-brave rājā,
with complete composure he approached
the Sṛñjaya lord.

18 Seeing him, the hermits
and the rājā of mahā-tapasyā
stood up and did *añjali* –
so did the tapasyā-seeking girl.

19 They offered the Bhārgava pūjā-respect
and *madhuparka* curd-and-honey;
he accepted their ritual reverence,
and sat down.

20 Then, O Bharata, Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma
and the lord of the Sṛñjayas,
Hotravāhana,
began their conversation.

21 After they finished, the rājā-ṛṣi discreetly
said these sweet words
to the mahā-powerful hero of the Bhārgavas,
axe-wielding Paraśurāma:

22 "Paraśurāma, lord, *prabhu*, this is my grand-daughter,
the daughter of the rājā of Kāśi.
She will say something,
meant for you."

23 Paraśurāma said to her:
"Very well, tell me your story."
She repeated her story to the fire-resplendent
son of Jamadagni,

24 After honouring him by touching his feet
with her head,
and then touching them with her lotus-soft hands,
and standing near him respectfully;

25 As she did this, she wept uncontrollably.
With profuse tears
she sought the grace of the refuge-providing
Bhārgava descendant.

26 Paraśurāma said, "As you are to Hotravāhana,
princess, so you are to me,
Pour out our heart's grief to me,
and I will help you."

27 Ambā replied: "Revered one, *bhagavan,*
O mahā-vowed one!
Lift me out of this filthy ocean of despair,
O radiant lord!"

28 She was lovely and young and graceful
(continued Bhīṣma),
and her words plunged Paraśurāma
in deep concentration.

29 He wondered, *What will she ask?*
This thought made him silent
for a long time;
he felt pity for her.

30 Requested to repeat her story,
the sweet-smiling girl
narrated before Paraśurāma
the tale of her misfortune.

31 Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma listened carefully
to the words of the rājā's daughter,
decided on a course of action,
and said to the lovely-thighed girl:

32 "Enchanting lady, I will send instructions
to Bhīṣma,
the incomparable Kaurava hero.
He will do what I tell him.

33 If he refuses to follow my instructions,
I will consume him on the battlefield –
and his followers –
with my fire-weapons.

34 Rāja-*putri*! If you wish me not to do this,
then I am ready
to persuade the heroic Śālva ruler too
in the same way."

35 "O glorious Bhārgava," said Ambā,
"I was released by Bhīṣma
the instant he heard
that I loved rājā Śālva.

36 So I went to the rājā of the Saubha,
and I spoke to him, urgently.
He suspected my virtue
and rejected me.

37 These are the facts of the case;
you will know
what is best in these circumstances,
O glorious Bhārgava.

38 At the root of my misfortune
is mahā-strict-vowed Bhīṣma;
it was he who humiliated me
by abducting me.

39 O mahā-muscled tiger-brave Bhārgava!
Kill Bhīṣma!
He caused my grief, my helplessness,
my lingering loneliness.

40 He is greedy, and mean and victory-flushed.
O Bhārgava, O faultless one,
it is right that he receive
his deserved punishment.

41 From the time of my abduction, O radiant lord,
I made up my mind
to get mahā-vowed Bhīṣma of the Bharatas
killed one way or other.

42 Which is why I want you to fulfil my desire,
O mahā-muscled one!
O faultless Paraśurāma! Kill Bhīṣma,
as Puraṁdara-Indra killed Vṛtra."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-EIGHT

1 To the sobbing girl who kept
again and again saying,
"*Prabhu*! Lord! Kill Bhīṣma, kill Bhīṣma,"
Paraśurāma said:

2 "Princess of Kāśi, I do not fight
except for the cause
of Veda-wise Brahmins.
Lovely girl, ask some other favour.

3 Both Bhīṣma and king Śālva
are obedient to me.
They will do my bidding.
Do not grieve. You have my word.

4 But I will not use weapons
except for the cause
of twice-born Brahmins.
Lovely one, this is my firm vow."

5 "It is Bhīṣma who caused my grief,"
Ambā said.
"My lord! One way or other, he must be killed.
And soon."

6 "Princess of Kāśi, I have told you,"
said Paraśurāma,
"I will make that venerable Bhīṣma
place your feet on his head!"

7 Amba insisted: "O Paraśurāma, kill Bhīṣma!
He screams like an anti-god!
If you wish to please me,
challenge him, and kill him.
It is right that you keep
your word to me."

8 While Ambā and Paraśurāma debated
(continued Bhīṣma),
the supreme dharmātmā ṛṣi Akṛtavraṇa,
interrupting them, said:

9 "O mahā-muscled one, surely it is not right
to refuse help
to a girl who seeks shelter.
Say you challenge Bhīṣma –

10 If he says, 'I acknowledge defeat',
or 'I'll do as you say' –
either way the request of the girl
will be met,

11 And your promise too will be honoured –
for this was the promise
you once made, O mahā-*muni*,
O radiant Paraśurāma –

12 When you defeated the Kṣatriyas,
you promised the Brahmins,
'If a Brahmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, or Śūdra
shows hostility

13 To any Brahmin, I will kill him.'
Father, O Bhārgava, you promised
'If anyone, in fear, comes to me
and seeks my help,

14 I will not refuse so long
as I have life in me.
And if a Kṣatriya, defeating other Kṣatriyas,
dares to fight me,

15 I will kill him, no matter
how radiantly glorious he be.'
O Bhārgava, is not Bhīṣma one such?
Challenge him!"

16 "O incomparable ṛṣi," replied Paraśurāma,
"I recall that promise –
but in this case I will achieve my end
by gentle means.

17 The princess of Kāśi has a serious task
to accomplish, O Brahmin.
I will take her with me,
and go personally to Bhīṣma.

18 If Bhīṣma, who thinks so much
of his war-like feats,
refuses to abide by my command,
I will kill him.

19 You know from my previous battles
with Kṣatriyas
that the arrows I shoot
rip clean through bodies!"

20 Paraśurāma of mahā-tapasyā announced
he would take with him
the Brahma-knowers of the forest.
The hermits rose.

21 The tapasyā-followers spent the night there,
performed the sacred fire and *japa* rituals,
and left,
intending to kill me.

22 Bhīṣma continued: O Bharata mahārāja!
Paraśurāma and the Brahma-knowers,
taking the girl with them,
proceeded to Kurukṣetra.

23 All the mahātmā tapasyā-followers,
led by the Bhārgava Paraśurāma,
came to the river Sarasvatī,
where they camped.

24 They camped there, and on the third day, O rājā
(continued Bhīṣma),
mahā-rigid-vowed Paraśurāma sent me word,
"Do as I say."

25 When I learnt of the arrival
of mahā-powerful Paraśurāma
at my kingdom's borders,
I cheerfully hurried to meet him,

26 Taking with me a gift-cow.
O Indra-among-rājās!
With me were Brahmins, *ṛtvik* priests,
and *purohitas* as illustrious as the gods.

27 The radiant son of Jamadagni
saw me approaching;
he accepted my pūjā-respect
and said to me these words:

28 "Bhīṣma, what possessed you to abduct
the Kāśī princess,
though you did not desire her –
and why did you release her?

29 You have stained the dharma
of this illustrious girl.
Who will now marry her,
after you have abducted her?

30 Because you abducted her,
Śālva has rejected her, O Bharata.
Take my advice, therefore.
Take her back, O Bharata.

31 Fulfil the sva-dharma of this daughter
of a king, O tiger-among-men.
O spotless one! Such behaviour by a rājā
is utterly disgraceful!"

32 Seeing Paraśurāma irrelevantly concerned,
I said to him:
"I certainly cannot offer her
to my brother again, Brahmin,

33 Because she made it very clear to me,
'I love Śālva.'
So, O Bhārgava descendant, I released her.
She went back to him.

34 Not from fear, pity, greed, or kāma,
not to accomplish private gain,
will I give up Kṣatriya-dharma,
I have vowed this."

35 Paraśurāma's eyes blazed
and expanded with anger.
He said: "If you disobey my command,
O bull-brave hero,

36 I will kill you and your followers."
He kept saying these words
again and again,
his eyes rolling with wrath.

37 And I kept using sweet words
again and again,
entreating the tiger-brave Bhārgava to understand,
but I failed to calm him.

38 So I bowed my head and did *praṇāma*
and I said
to that supreme Brahmin:
"Why do you want to fight me?

39 When I was young, you instructed me
in the four weapons –
the hand-hurled, the not-hand-hurled,
the sometimes-hurled-sometimes-not,
the machine-hurled.
O Bhārgava, I am your pupil."

40 His eyes still flaming with anger,
Paraśurāma said: "Bhīṣma!
I am your guru, and yet you refuse
to accept her!

41 You refuse to please me by not accepting
the Kāśī king's daughter.
O mahā-minded Kaurava!
No other way can you please me.

42 Take back this girl, O mahā-muscled one,
and perpetuate your race.
You abducted her,
so she cannot find a husband."

43 I said to Paraśurāma,
the destroyer of hostile cities:
"It cannot be. What is the use, mahā-ṛṣi,
of pointless trying?

44 Because you were my guru in the past,
Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma,
I make this special effort now.
You know that I have refused her.

45 What man will live with a woman
who loves another?
She's like a poisonous snake in the house –
a fearful risk.

46 O mahā-strict vowed Paraśurāma,
I will not forsake dharma
even for fear of Vāsava-Indra.
Accept this, or do as you please.

47 O pure-ātmaned one, there is a śloka
in the Purāṇas
chanted by no less a person
than mahā-wise mahātmā Marutta:

48 *If a guru is proud,*
*if he swerves from the path,*
*if he cannot determine*
*what his duties prescribe, –*
*his orders must still*
*be faithfully followed.*

49 So long as you remained a guru,
I respected you;
but now you are no more a guru,
so I will fight you.

50 I will not kill a guru,
specially a Brahmin guru.
I forgive you because you are steeped
in tapasyā.

51 If a man sees a Brahmin fighting
on the Kṣatriya side
and kills him because he refuses
to give up fighting,

52 He is not guilty of killing a Brahmin.
So says dharma.
O tapasyā-rich one, I am a Kṣatriya:
this is Kṣatriya-dharma.

53 By treating a person in a manner
in which he deserves to be treated,
I do no adharma,
I am not stained.

54 When a person, normally able to discriminate,
has doubts about artha and dharma,
he should unhesitatingly
choose dharma.

55 Since, in this matter of doubtful artha,
you behave unjustly with me,
I have decided to fight you
in the great combat.

56 Look at my heroic arms
and my super-human abilities!
O descendant of Bhṛgu, consider carefully
what I am capable of.

57 I will do what I can;
I will fight you on Kurukṣetra.
O mahā-radiant one! You have forced me to this –
so be prepared.

58 I will shoot a hundred arrows, Paraśurāma,
and I will kill you,
and you will obtain the holy regions
which your goodness deserves.

59 Return to Kurukṣetra, O tapasyā-rich one!
You who love war, go –
and I will meet you there,
on the field of battle.

60 Paraśurāma, Bhārgava, on the battlefield
where you propitiated your forefathers,
I will propitiate mine
by sacrificing you.

61 Go there, hard-to-defeat Paraśurāma,
you who call yourself Brahmin,
and I will expose
your boast,

62 The hollow boast of long ago –
that you wiped out,
single-handed, the whole race of Kṣatriyas.
You know how?

63 Because there was no Bhīṣma at the time,
no Kṣatriya like me.
Valiant Kṣatriyas came later.
You destroyed straws and twigs.

64 Born at last is the man who will expose
your so-called valour.
It is me, Bhīṣma, vanquisher of hostile cities.
O mahā-muscled one!
I will crush your pride on the battlefield.
You have been warned."

65 Paraśurāma laughed and said to me:
"It is good news, O Bharata,
that *you* have decided to fight me
on the battlefield.

66 We will meet then on the battleground
of Kurukṣetra, Kaurava.
I will do exactly as you have said.
Let us go, foe-chastiser.

67 There your mother Jāhnavī-Gaṅgā
will see you dead, killed by my hundred arrows,
food for vultures, crows,
and carrion-consuming *kaṅkas.*

68 You are pathetic, O ruler of the earth!
Your mother, Gaṅgā-devī,
whom Siddhas and Cāraṇas worship,
will weep today.

69 The mahā-fortune-favoured daughter of Bhāgīratha,
mother Gaṅgā,
who gave birth to a fool like you,
surely deserves better.

70 But let us go together,
O war-eager and hard-to-defeat Bhīṣma!
Come to the field in your war-chariot,
O bull-brave Bharata!"

71 I bowed my head in *praṇāma*
to the conqueror-of-cities
Paraśurāma, son of Jamadagni,
and said, "So be it."

72 Having said this, Paraśurāma, ready for battle,
went to Kurukṣetra,
and I reported everything
to Satyavatī.

73 After the propitiatory rituals were over,
after my mother had blessed me,
and asked the Brahmins to bless me,
O mahā-radiant one,

74 I climbed into a splendid silver chariot
pulled by white horses –
a beautiful vehicle with tiger-skins
on its excellent seats.

75 It was loaded with mahā-war-weapons
and other equipment;
it was driven by a high-born,
highly-skilled charioteer,

76 Expert in the art of warfare,
and careful in manoeuvring,
who had witnessed heroic feats.
In my white coat of mail,

77 Carrying a white bow, I left the city,
O excellent Bharata,
with a huge white umbrella
shading my head.

78 White feather-fans waved on both sides,
O earth-ruler;
I wore white, my ornaments and head-dress
were white.

79 I left the city of Hastināpura;
songs of victory accompanied me.
I drove to Kurukṣetra,
O bull-brave Bharata.

80 The wind-swift and mind-swift horses,
driven by my excellent charioteer,
brought me in no time
to the field.

81 Both I and illustrious Paraśurāma
drove quickly, O rājā,
to Kurukṣetra, each eager to display
his war-skill.

82 Seeing tapasyā-dedicated Paraśurāma
in front of me,
I took out my marvellous conch
and blew into it loudly.

83 Indra and his hosts of gods,
tapasyā-followers, Brahmins –
all had arrived in order to witness
the great duel, O rājā.

84 Dark clouds suddenly loomed up,
and there was a shower
of divine garlands,
and sounds of divine music.

85 All the tapasyā-devotees,
the admirers of the scion of the Bhṛgus
comprised the audience
that surrounded us.

86 My mother, Gaṅgā-devi,
who wishes the welfare of all, O rājā,
appeared in person, and said:
"Son, what are you doing?

87 O incomparable Kaurava,
I will go to the son of Jamadagni,
and plead with him again and again:
*Do not fight Bhīṣma*!

88 My son, do not fight a Brahmin!
O earth-ruler,
do not fight the son of Jamadagni!"
She scolded me.

89 “My son, Paraśurāma has the strength
of Hara-Śiva–
he is a Kṣatriya-annihilator,
and you wish to fight him!”

90 I did *añjali* before the devī,
O excellent Bharata,
and told her all that had happened
since the svayamvara.

91 I told her
what I promised before Paraśurāma,
and repeated the deeds
of the daughter of the Kāśī-rājā.

92 My mother, the mahā-river Gaṅgā,
went to him;
she entreated ṛṣi Bhārgava Paraśurāma
to forgive me.

93 “Bhīṣma is your pupil –
O do not fight him!”
And he said to her,
even as she implored him:
“Ask him. I am here
because he disobeys me.”

94 Gaṅgā-devī, because she loved her son,
returned to Bhīṣma,
but his eyes were large with anger;
he refused to listen (said Vaiśampāyana).

95 Then the mahā-tapasyā-dedicated dharmātmā,
the Bhārgava Brahmin Paraśurāma
came before him,
and challenged him to combat.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-NINE

1 I laughed (Bhīṣma continued)
and said to war-eager Paraśurāma:
“I am in a chariot.
I cannot fight you, on the ground.

2 So ride a chariot,
and put on another coat of armour
if you wish to combat me,
O mahā-armed heroic Paraśurāma."

3 Paraśurāma on the battlefield also laughed,
and he said:
"The earth is my chariot, Bhīṣma,
the Vedas are my horses,

4 Mātariśvan-wind is my charioteer, the Veda-mothers –
Gāyatrī, Sāvitrī, Sārasvatī – my armour.
These are my battle equipments,
O Kaurava descendant."

5 O son of Gāndhārī! No sooner had he said this
than Paraśurāma,
the truly valiant hero, rained an arrow-shower
upon me.

6 I saw the son of Jamadagni –
it seemed, in a chariot –
in a dazzling, wonderful,
armed-with-all-weapons chariot –

7 A mind-materialised chariot!
It was massive, and sacred, city-huge,
with supernatural horses,
decorated with gold.

8 O mahā-muscled one, he was wearing armour;
he shone like the sun and the moon;
he had a bow and quiver
and finger-protectors.

9 War-eager Akṛtavraṇa was his charioteer
in that combat –
a *sakhā*-friend of the Bhārgava,
and wise in the Vedas.

10 He challenged me, shouting, "Come, fight!"
His repeated challenge
to face him on the field
sent horripilatory shivers in me.

11 He dazzled like the sun, he was mahā-powerful;
indeed, he was invincible.
And I – all alone I faced
the annihilator of the Kṣatriyas.

12 He fired three arrow-swarms upon me.
I stopped, alighted,
flung aside my bow, and went to face on foot
the foremost of ṛṣis.

13 I approached the finest-of-Brahmins Paraśurāma
and I honoured him;
after revering him,
I said these noble words:

14 "My equal or my superior, I will fight you,
O Paraśurāma! O radiant one!
You are my guru by dharma. Bless me.
Grant me victory."

15 Paraśurāma replied: "What you have done,
O excellent mahā-muscled Kaurava,
is right for a success-seeker.
It is dharma to challenge excellence.

16 Lord of the world, I would have cursed you
had you behaved otherwise.
Be patient, O Kaurava,
and fight your battle.

17 I cannot give you my blessing for victory –
I am your antagonist.
Go – and fight. Keep dharma in mind.
You have pleased me."

18 I namaskāra-ed him,
climbed into my chariot,
and blew loudly into my gold-inlaid
war-conch.

19 That combat between him and me
lasted many days,
for each of us was dedicated
to defeating the other, O Bharata.

20 In the combat, he attacked first
with six hundred and nine
*kaṅka*-feathered arrows that sped
with vulture-wing swiftness.

21 They overcast my four horses and chariot,
O lord of the world,
but I was protected by my coat of armour,
and I kept calm.

22 I namāskāra-ed the gods and Brahmins
who had gathered;
they stood there, witnessing the combat;
and I said, smiling:

23 "You have mocked me, but I have honoured you
as an ācārya.
Brahmin, listen to what you should do
if you seek dharma.

24 I am not at war with the Vedas
in your body,
nor with your mahā-dignity as a Brahmin,
nor with your tapasyā.

25 I am at war with your Kṣatriya-dharma.
O Paraśurāma,
you live as a Kṣatriya.
A militant Brahmin is a Kṣatriya.

26 Look at the strength of my bow, O hero,
look at the power of my arms!
I will sever your bow
with an arrow."

27 I shot a broad-headed *bhalla*-arrow at him.
O bull-brave Bharata!
It sliced the top part of his bow;
it fell on the ground.

28 Almost immediately, I let loose
a hundred straight arrows
at the son of Jamadagni –
all of them *kaṅka*-vulture-winged.

29 They grazed his body like nāga-serpents
and whizzed through the air
at great speed, spitting blood
as they went.

30 His body laccrated and bloodied all over,
heroic Paraśurāma, O rājā,
stood there, like the Meru mountain cascading
liquid minerals,

31 Like an aśoka tree, at close of winter,
bursting into red blossom, O rājā,
like the *kiṁśuka* tree when it is draped
in crinson flowers.

32 Furious Paraśurāma strung another bow
and discharged
golden-winged arrows of incredible sharpness
at me.

33 Those arrows swooped upon me
like flaming, poisonous snakes;
their impact stunned me,
as if my life was being pierced.

34 But I, equally furious, shot more arrows
at Paraśurāma –
one hundred of them –
after recollecting my senses.

35 Struck by these arrows,
which blazed like fire or the sun
and stung like venomous snakes,
Paraśurāma lost consciousness.

36 I felt sorry for him and I stopped, O Bharata.
Ashamed, I shouted:
"*Dhik*! Shame on war!
And shame on the dharma of Kṣatriyas!"

37 O rājā! I was filled with grief, and I said:
"Aho, how wicked
is the deed I have done
in the name of Kṣatriya-dharma!

38 I have shot arrows and wounded a guru,
a Brahmin, a supreme dharmātmā."
Saying this, O Bharata,
I stopped shooting.

39 Day was ending; the thousand-rayed sun,
after heating the earth,
retired to his rest;
and the combat also ceased.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY

1 O lord of the earth (continued Bhīṣma),
my skilled charioteer
extracted the arrows from his body, from mine,
and from the wounded horses.

2 Next morning, with the rising of the sun,
the fight recommenced.
The horses had been washed, fed,
and allowed to roll on the ground.

3 Seeing me armour-clad rush at him
in my war-chariot,
illustrious Paraśurāma readied his chariot
with great deliberation.

4 I saw Paraśurāma, eager for battle,
rush at me,
so I laid aside my bow
and alighted from my chariot.

5 Once again I bowed to him, O Bharata;
then I re-mounted and,
fearless, I faced the son of Jamadagni,
ready for combat.

6 Without warning, I let loose
a shower of arrows,
to which he replied
with an equal counter-shower.

7 Stirred to anger, the son of Jamadagni
again discharged
fearful, sharp arrows with mouths
like those of fierce snakes.

8 But I blocked and disintegrated them, O rājā,
again and again, even as they flew,
with hundreds and thousands
of counter-arrows.

9 The illustrious son of Jamadagni
then decided to shoot
supernatural missiles at me,
but these too I repulsed.

10 Indeed, O mahā-muscled one,
the feats that I performed
with my weapons created a mahā-cacophony
and commotion everywhere.

11 I fired the wind-missile called Vāyavya
at Paraśurāma, O Bharata,
and he repulsed it with the weapon
known as the Guhyaka.

12 Chanting appropriate mantras,
I released the fire-missile Āgneya,
which he repulsed with a water-weapon
called the Vāruṇa.

13 I also repulsed many of his missiles,
and Paraśurāma,
familiar with supernatural weapons,
retaliated with equal skill.

14 Swerving suddenly to the right,
the excellent Brahmin Paraśurāma,
son of Jamadagni,
succeeded in grazing my chest.

15 O excellent Bharata, I lost consciousness
in my chariot.
Seeing me faint, my charioteer drove away
from the spot.

16 Seeing my deplorable plight
after being grazed by the arrows of Paraśurāma,
and removed from the scene
in an unconscious state,

17 The followers of Paraśurāma – Akṛtavraṇa,
the daughter of the Kāśī king, and others –
began, O Bharata,
shouting joyfully.

18 But I regained consciousness
and ordered my charioteer:
"I am all right now.
Charioteer, drive me to Paraśurāma."

19 The charioteer drove me to Paraśurāma;
the horses were wind-swift, O Kaurava,
they were handsome,
they seemed to dance, not gallop.

20 As soon as he came within range,
I released a deluge of arrows;
I was furious,
I wanted to crush him.

21 But Paraśurāma repulsed
my straight-coursing arrows in mid-air
by firing three arrows
for every one of mine.

22 All his followers were hugely happy
when they saw
my arrows shattered
by hundreds and thousands of his.

23 So I decided to cut down Paraśurāma,
son of Jamadagni,
by shooting a dazzlingly lovely,
Kāla-cruel arrow.

24 It hit him full force:
the shock knocked him down;
he fell on the field;
he seemed to be unconscious.

25 As soon as he fell, all his followers
shouted "Hai! Hai!"
It seemed as if the sun had crashed
on the earth, O Bharata.

26 All the tapasyā-rich hermits
and the Kāśī king's daughter,
anxious and agitated, made every effort
to revive him, O Kaurava descendant,

27 By massaging him gently
with palms dipped in cold water,
by resuscitary embraces,
by chanting victory-blessings, O Kaurava.

28 And he did revive, the great Paraśurāma,
and exclaimed, agitated:
"Don't move, Bhīṣma! You are dead!"
He aimed an arrow

29 In my direction; in that mahā-combat
that arrow of his
grazed my left side –
I shuddered like a storm-tossed tree.

30 Paraśurāma butchered my horses,
and blinded me with swarms of arrows
shot with skill enough
to slice a strand of hair.

31 But I was agile and succeeded
in blocking his shafts
with such skill that his arrows and mine
seemed air-suspended.

32 So many arrows were shot by me
and by Paraśurāma
that the sunlight was shut off
by nets of arrows.

33 Such thick nets that even the wind
was trapped in them.
The wind not blowing,
and the sun not shining,

34 And the arrows clashing against each other!
– A fierce fire was sparked off;
it swallowed the arrows
that produced it.

35 O rājā, it seemed that Paraśurāma
released hundreds,
and thousands, and tens of thousands,
and hundreds of thousands,

36 And crores, and hundreds of crores
of arrows
in swift succession.
And I too shot snake-arrows

37 Which disintegrated the shafts
that he fired at me, O king,
and his arrows fell
like so many dismembered snakes.

38 This accurately describes the actual combat
on that day.
Then, excellent Bharata, it was evening;
and my guru retired.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE

1 O excellent Bharata, when Paraśurāma returned
(continued Bhīṣma)
the next day, a tumultuous encounter
took place.

2 Every day, the radiant mahātmā Paraśurāma,
expert in using supernatural weapons,
began employing them
against me.

3 I countered them with anti-missiles
as best as I could:
I had decided to sacrifice my life
if necessary.

4 So apparently had mahā-energetic Paraśurāma,
specially when he discovered
that all his weapons were being neutralised
by my tactics.

5 Observing his weapons
repulsed, the mahātmā
decided to fire
the śakti-missile
which sped like a meteor
from the hands of Kāla.

6 In shattered the missile
that raced like the doom-
bringing fires of Kāla;
it fell on the earth,
splintered in three;
sweet breezes blew.

7 Paraśurāma, excited,
deluged me with twelve
horrendous missiles,
so radiant and swift,
that I cannot, O Bharata,
describe them in words.

8 For how is that possible?
When the arrows converge
from different directions
like the twelve suns that blaze
when the cosmos collapses,
one feels only fear.

9 When the arrows like nets
came rushing, I blocked
them with arrows like nets.
With twelve of my arrows,
I baffled the power
of the twelve fierce suns.

10 Paraśurāma-mahātmā
replied with more arrows
with golden shafts
and golden wings, O rājā.
They sped through the air
like radiant meteors.

11 These too I repulsed
with my shield and my sword,
O Indra-among-men,
and showered arrows
intended to kill
his charioteer and horses.

12 When he noticed the swarm
of golden snake-arrows
released at his chariot,
Paraśurāma-mahātmā,
the Haihaya lord,
shot divine missiles.

13 And suddenly a host
of arrows descended
like a swarm of locusts,
devouring my body,
devouring my horses,
my chariot and charioteer.

14 Those arrows shattered
my chariot, my horses,
my charioteer, O rājā.
They crumbled the wheels,
the axle, the spokes,
the yoke of my chariot.

15 To the best of my powers,
I hurled on my guru
a counter-discharge;
and the violent impact
made that Brahmin hero
a blood-dripping mass.

16 I bled with his arrows,
he bled with mine.
And late in the evening,
when the sunrays vanished
in the hills in the west,
the combat ended.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-TWO

1 When the sun rose, O Indra-among-rājās
(continued Bhīṣma),
the combat resumed
between Bhārgava Paraśurāma and me.

2 That terrible warrior,
sitting inside his flashing chariot,
hurled arrow-nets at me
like clouds on a mountain.

3 My good friend, the charioteer
who always wished my welfare,
was hit by arrows; he fell down
from the chariot.

4 He fell into a deep coma, he seemed
to have lost all consciousness,
he was hurled out
of his chariot.

5 The arrows of Paraśurāma were fierce:
they killed him.
For an instant, O Indra-among-rajas,
I felt afraid.

6 My charioteer dead, I was alarmed,
I became nervous;
it was then that Paraśurāma
fired his death-arrow at me.

7 He pulled his bow fully taut;
then the Bhārgava hero,
taking advantage of my alarm,
shot his deadly arrow.

8 That blood-drinking arrow struck me
on my chest
and hit the ground; with it I also
fell down heavily.

9 Paraśurāma thought he had killed me.
He and his followers
began roaring like clouds, O bull-brave Bharata,
shouting again and again.

10 Paraśurāma was delighted;
O rājā, when he saw me topple;
he let out a reverberating mahā-roar,
and so did his followers.

11 My Kaurava supporters who had come
to witness the combat
were overcome with despair
when I collapsed.

12 Even as I fell, O lion-like rājā,
I noticed eight Brahmins,
radiant like suns,
surround and support me
with the strength of their arms,
and take me away.

13 Lifted on the arms of the Brahmins,
I never touched the ground;
like friends, they bore me away,
aloft.

14 They sprinkled water on me,
I felt as if I was breathless,
sprawled in mid-space. Still carrying me,
they said, O rājā:

15 "Don't fear, you will succeed."
And so, I stood up, comforted,
and I saw my mother Gaṅgā, river of rivers,
in the chariot.

16 O Indra-among-the-Kauravas!
My mahā-river mother
was driving my chariot!

After touching her feet,
I honoured my *pitṛs*
and mounted my chariot.

17 She protected me, my chariot, my horses,
and my weapons.
Then I did *añjali* before her
and bid her farewell.

18 I picked up the reins of the wind-swift horses,
O Bharata,
and waged battle with Paraśurāma
till the day ended.

19 O excellent Bharata,
in the course of that battle,
I fired a straight, mahā-powerful arrow.
at Paraśurāma's heart.

20 He was knocked down;
he fell on his knees;
his bow slipped from his hands;
Paraśurāma fainted.

21 When Paraśurāma, the hugely-generous giver,
fell,
the sky became overcast with clouds
that disgorged torrents of blood.

22 Meteors fell in hundreds and thousands:
they screamed,
they shook the earth.
Rāhu swallowed the radiant sun.

23 Fierce winds began blowing,
the earth trembled,
and *kaṅka*-vultures, crows, and cranes
started a joyful screeching.

24 The points of the horizon
appeared to be on fire;
jackals howled; untouched,
drums began sounding weirdly.

25 All these frightening omens were seen
the instant
mahātmā Paraśurāma sprawled unconscious
on the earth.

26 But he recovered suddenly
and rushed at me aggressively;
he seemed to be maddened
by an excess of anger, O Kaurava.

27 Mahā-muscled Paraśurāma
lifted his powerful bow,
and strung an arrow;
but I refused to be intimidated.

28 The mahā-ṛṣis there were moved to pity,
but Bhārgava-Paraśurāma
remained firm in his anger. When I fired
my fiery Kāla-fierce arrow,
the tremendous-ātmaned hero
repulsed me.

29 Then, bleary with dust,
its maṇḍala-halo befogged,
the sun retired,
and cool breezes blew,
and night reappeared,
and we rested from combat.

30 O rājā, this way
the duel concluded,
but when morning dawned
we fought once again,
day after day after day,
for twenty-three days.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-THREE

1 O Indra-among-rājās (continued Bhīṣma),
during the night,
after praṇāma-ing the Brahmins, *pitṛs,*
and gods,

2 Night-creatures, the elements,
and the rājās of the earth,
I lay on my bed;
I was alone, and I thought:

3 *The horrible combat between Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma*
*and me has lasted for many days;*
*it is fraught*
*with serious consequences.*

4 *But I have not been able to defeat*
*on the field*
*this mahā-powerful mahā-energetic Brahmin*
*called Paraśurāma.*

5 *O gods, if it is possible for me*
*to defeat Jāmadagni,*
*then show me the way to do so,*
*O gracious ones!*

6 Lacerated by arrows, I was sleeping
on my right side.
O Indra-among-rājās, it so happened,
around dawn,

7 The same good Brahmins who had lifted me
on the field
when I fell from my chariot, comforted me,
"Don't be afraid".

8 Mahārāja, I saw them in a vision;
they surrounded me
and said to me exactly these words,
O Kaurava descendant:

9 'Son of Gaṅgā, do not fear. Rise!
Do not fear at all.
We will protect you, for you, O Kaurava,
represent us.

10 Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma
can never defeat you;
O bull-brave Bharata,
you will defeat him in combat.

11 Look at this precious weapon –
you will recognise it,
for you were familiar with it
in your previous birth.

12 O Bharata! It is Prajāpati's weapon,
forged by Viśvakarman himself.
It is the Prasvāpa, not known to anyone,
not even Paraśurāma.

13 Materialise this weapon mentally,
O mahā-muscled one, and wield it with yoga.
O defectless Indra-among-rājās,
it is all yours.

14 You will succeed in neutralising
the mightiest enemy, O Kaurava,
with this weapon. It will not kill Paraśurāma,
so, O lord of men,

15 No blame will fall on you, O bestower of honour,
Struck by the infallible energy
of this weapon, Paraśurāma will lapse
into a coma.

16 After defeating him by this tactic,
you could revive him
by applying the powers of the weapon
called Sambodhana.

17 O Kaurava, do as we instruct you,
at crack of dawn, in your chariot.
Dead or in coma –
what is the difference?

18 There is no way of killing Paraśurāma,
O earth-lord.
Rejoice that you have the weapon Prasvāpa,
and act quickly."

19 Saying this, O rājā, the Brahmins vanished –
all eight of them.
They were sun-radiant, identical in appearance
and incorporeal.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOUR

1 The night passed (continued Bhīṣma)
and I woke.
Recalling the dream, I horripilated
with exquisite delight.

2 A renewed combat began, O Bharata,
an awesome encounter,
a wonderful duel,
which made all creatures horripilate.

3 Bhārgava-Paraśurāma fired a net-volley
of arrows,
which I easily neutralised with a counter-volley
of my own.

4 Paraśurāma of mahā-tapasyā,
recalling what happened
the previous day, furiously flung
a śakti-missile at me,

5 As hard as Indra's thunder,
as radiant as Yama's rod,
a shaft of flame whose tongue licked
the field up.

6 It hit my shoulder, O tiger-brave Bharata,
It struck me, O Kaurava descendant,
like a bolt of lightning suddenly darting
from the sky.

7 O pink-eyed one, bloodied by Paraśurāma,
I stood there, like a mountain,
red minerals streaming down my body,
O mahā-muscled one.

8 Infuriated, I released a death-sharp arrow
at Jāmadagni,
an arrow that had the venom
of a deadly snake.

9 That incomparable Brahmin was struck straight
on his forehead, mahārāja;
he stood erect, like a handsome
high-peaked hill.

10 Roused to revenge, he turned,
pulled his bow taut,
and fired a deadly arrow, like Kāla,
like Antaka-Yama.

11 It whistled through the air
like un uncurling serpent, O rājā;
it hit my chest, and I fell down
in a pool of blood.

12 But I regained my senses,
and fired at Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma
a *śakti* which flickered and consumed
like lightning.

13 It hit him on his chest. O rājā;
that excellent Brahmin collapsed;
he fell down, tottering,
in a shaking fit.

14 His friend, the Brahmin of mahā-tapasyā,
Akṛtavaraṇa embraced him
and spoke soothing and auspicious words
to him.

15 Revived, mahā-vowed Paraśurāma,
now stirred to a frenzy
of anger and revenge,
produced his superlative Brāhma-weapon.

16 I also prepared my Brāhma-weapon
to neutralise his;
my weapon blazed like the conflagration
at the end of a yuga.

17 The two Brāhma-missiles collided
in mid-air,
neither able to strike the warrior
it targeted.

18 The sky seemed to burst into flames!
O earth-lord,
all the creatures of earth
became tense and fearful.

19 The ṛṣis, gandharvas, and gods,
while marvelling at the incandescence,
were troubled
by strange misgivings.

20 The earth, with all her mountains,
forests and vegetation,
shook, and the intense heat agitated
all creatures,

21 The sky seemed to burn, O rājā,
and the ten directions
were thick with smoke.
Sky-creatures, suffocated, flew away.

22 All the gods, anti-gods, and rākṣasas
cried "Hai! Hai!"
I thought, *This is the time,*
and eager to discharge it, O Bharata,

23 I quickly prepared the Prasvāpa-missile,
as instructed
by the Brahma-knowers. Imaginated,
the marvellous missile materialised.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FIVE

1 O rājā! I had made up my mind (said Bhīṣma)
when a mahā-hullabaloo of sky-voices said,
"Bhīṣma, O Kaurava descendant,
do not fire the Prasvāpa-missile!"

2 But I ignored them and aimed the missile
at the Bhṛgu-descendant.
Even as I did so, Nārada appeared
and said to me:

3 "The gods are watching from the sky,
O Kaurava.
They forbid you to fire
the Prasvāpa-missile today.

4 Paraśurāma is a man of tapasyā,
he is a Brahmin, your guru.
On no condition can you humiliate him,
O Kaurava."

5 I saw the eight Brahma-knowers in the sky
O Indra-among-rājās.
They smiled and they said to me,
slowly and gently:

6 "O bull-brave Bharata, do what Nārada says.
What he says, O Kaurava,
is meant for the benefit of all the creatures
of the world."

7 So I re-called the mahā-Prasvāpa-missile
and, instead,
brought out the Brāhma-weapon for use
in the combat.

8 O lion-like rājā!
When he saw me reject
the missile, he exclaimed
happily on the field,
"What a fool I have been!
I am vanquished, O Bhīṣma!"

9 Jamadagni's son
saw his father and also
his grandfather near him;
they surrounded him
they consoled him, and these
were the words of his father:

10 "Never be so reckless again,
my son, *tāta*,
as to fight in combat against Bhīṣma,
who is the finest Kṣatriya.

11 O descendent of Bhṛgu,
a Kṣatriya's dharma is to fight;
a Brahmin's wealth is to study
and keep holy vows.

12 There was a special reason why we ordered you
to fight earlier,
when you, horrendously,
wiped out all the Kṣatriyas.

[V:185:13-21]

Transcreated by P. Lal

13 You have fought enough with Bhīṣma;
let it end, dear one!
O mahā-muscled one,
stop now and leave the field of combat.

14 May you prosper!
But no more brandishing of the bow!
Invincible one, enough for today.
O Bhārgava! Return to tapasyā.

15 Even Bhīṣma, Śāntanu's son, has been urged
by the gods to stop fighting;
they keep telling him
'Don't fight.

16 Don't fight against your guru Paraśurāma.'
They repeat:
'It is not right for you to defeat him
in battle.

17 Offer the Brahmin your respect, O son of Gaṅgā,
on the field of battle.
We are your guru-elders.
We forbid you to fight.

18 Bhīṣma is the greatest of the Vasus.
You are lucky, my child,
to be still alive. Śāntanu's son by Gaṅgā
is a mahā-famed Vasu.

19 How can you ever hope to defeat him?
Stop immediately, O Bhargava.
The Pāṇḍava Arjuna,
who is Puraṁdara-Indra's son,

20 Who is Nara, lord-of-creatures Prajāpati,
a hero, earlier a god,
eternal, powerful, known in the three worlds
as the ambidexterous one –
he has been ordained by Self-Born Brahmā
to be Bhīṣma's destroyer.' "

21 To his *pitṛs'* advice (continued Bhīṣma),
Paraśurāma replied:
"I have made a vow –
I cannot stop the combat.

22 Never before in my life have I retreated
in battle, O my ancestors!
If you think it proper, ask Gaṅgā's son
to stop fighting.

23 I cannot withdraw from this combat."
Then, O rājā,
all the *munis*, headed by Ṛcīka,
who asked him,

24 Came to me, accompanied by Nārada,
and said:
"*Tāta*, dear child! Stop the combat,
Pay respect to that excellent Brahmin."

25 I replied: "It is my Kṣatriya-dharma.
It is my vow.
Never in this world will I withdraw
from battle,

26 Never let arrows pierce my back.
Not for material profit,
and not out of fear,
never for the sake of wealth,

27 Will I forsake my eternal dharma –
this is my decision."
So all the *munis*, O king,
with Nārada at their head,

28 And my mother Bhāgīrathī-Gaṅgā accompanying,
stationed themselves mid-field.
But I stood ready with my bow and arrows,
as earlier;
I was prepared to continue the combat.
They said to Paraśurāma;

29 Unanimously, on the battlefield,
appealing to Bhṛgu's descendant:
"Brahmins have butter-soft hearts, O Bhārgava.
Be lenient and gentle.

30 O Rāma, Rāma, finest of the twice-born,
refrain from combat.
You cannot kill Bhīṣma, O Bhārgava,
and Bhīṣma cannot kill you."

31 They blocked off the field,
and spoke these words to him,
and they succeeded in making the Bhṛgu descendant
put aside his weapons.

32 I had a vision again of those eight
Brahma-knowers
they shone in the sky like eight dazzling
star-clusters.

33 On the field of combat,
they said to me affectionately:
"O mahā-muscled one, go to your guru Paraśurāma.
Help the world."

34 I noticed that Paraśurāma had accepted
his well-wishers' advice,
so I, for the good of the worlds,
accepted theirs.

35 I was grievously wounded,
but I went to Paraśurāma
and bowed; he, of mahā-tapasyā,
lovingly said to me:

36 "There is no Kṣatriya in the world
to equal you.
Go, Bhīṣma. Your conduct in this combat
has pleased me."

37 In my presence, he summoned the girl;
in front of all the mahātmās,
the Bhārgava descendant spoke gently
to Ambā.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-SIX

1 "In front of all these witnesses here,"
said Paraśurāma,
"I have done the utmost
that is in my power,

2 But I have not been able to defeat
the potent arms-wielder Bhīṣma,
though I used
all my energy.

3 This is my greatest śakti,
this is my utmost strength.
What more can I do?
Gracious lady, please go elsewhere.

4 Seek refuge with Bhīṣma.
You have no other refuge.
The mahā-weapons of Bhīṣma
have routed me."

5 Saying this, mahātmā Paraśurāma sighed,
and was silent.
The girl said to the illustrious discendant
of the Bhargavas:

6 "Revered one, *bhagavan,* what you say is right.
Versatile Bhīṣma is invincible –
he cannot be defeated
even by the gods.

7 You have displayed your finest prowess
and skill;
you have shown great strength,
deployed various weapons;

8 But you have not been able
to vanquish Bhīṣma.
But I am determined never to go
to Bhīṣma.

9 I will go, O tapasyā-rich one,
wherever I can find a way
of humbling Bhīṣma,
O Bhārgava descendant."

10 She said this, and she left,
her eyes inflamed with anger.
She resolved to practise tapasyā
in order to kill me.

11 The excellent descendant of the Bhārgavas,
and the *munis*,
bid me farewell,
and went back to where they came from.

12 I climbed into my chariot, and,
as the Brahmins chanted my praises,
I entered the city
and informed my mother Satyavatī

13 Of all that had occurred.
Mahārāja, she blessed me.
I ordered intelligent men to keep a watch
on the girl.

14 They kept a daily record of her activities –
where she went, what she did –
and faithfully reported them
to me.

15 But from the day the girl began
to practise tapasyā in the forest,
I was disturbed,
I became moody.

16 No Kṣatriya could defeat me
by sheer physical strength –
except a Brahma-knowing one
devoted to rigid tapasyā.

17 O rājā, I passed this information
to Nārada
and also to Vyāsa –
and both gave me this advice:

18 "Bhīṣma, do not be upset
by what the Kāśī princess does.
Who has the power to change destiny
by human effort?"

19 Mahārāja, she went to an āshram-maṇḍala
on the bank of the Yamunā,
and there she practised
truly superhuman tapasyā.

20 She fasted, she became thin and dry,
her hair was matted,
her body dust-covered;
her only wealth was tapasyā;
for six months she stood motionless,
living on air.

21 For one year she remained submerged
in the waters of the Yamunā,
eating absolutely nothing,
performing tapasyā.

22 She broke fast by munching on a dry leaf.
For another year,
she stood on one leg, erect,
sustained by her extreme wrath.

23 For twelve years she continued thus,
setting aglow both earth and sky.
Even her relatives could not persuade her
to change her mind.

24 She went to Vatsa-land,
renowned as the āshram
of the Siddhas and the Cāraṇas
and mahātmā holy men.

25 She bathed in the sacred waters of *tīrthas*
day and night.
The princess of Kāśī determinedly roamed
where she pleased.

26 She went, mahārāja, to Nanda-āshram,
to Ulūka-āshram,
to Cyavana-āshram,
and to the spot sacred to Brahmā,

27 To Prayāga, where the gods perform yajñas;
then, mahārāja,
she went to Bhogavatī,
and to the āshram of Kauśika;

28 Then to Māṇḍavya-āshram, O rājā,
and to Dilīpa-āshram,
to the lake of Rāma,
and to the āshram of Pailagarg.

29 The Kāśi princess bathed in these sacred *tīrthas*,
O lord of the world,
and kept practising
the strictest and the fiercest tapasyā.

30 O Kaurava! One day my mother
said to her in the water:
"Fortunate girl, why do you hurt yourself so?
Tell me the truth."

31 The faultless girl joined her palms in *añjali*, O rājā,
and replied:
"Lovely-eyed one, Paraśurāma has been defeated
by Bhīṣma.

32 There is no one else – no lord of earth –
who can defeat arrow-shooting Bhīṣma.
My tapasyā is
to destroy Bhīṣma.

33 Devī, I wander with one purpose only –
to kill that king.
This is my only vow, devī –
and this I will acomplish."

34 My ocean-seeking mother said to her:
"This is wrong.
Lovely one, you will never be able
to fulfil your wish.

35 Princess of Kāśī, if you remain firm
in your vow to kill Bhīṣma
and, while doing tapasya,
should you die,

36 You will in your next birth
become a meandering river,
unknown and inaccessible,
with water in it only, lovely girl,
during the monsoon,
and dry during the other eight months,

37 Swarming with horrible alligators,
filling all with fear."
O rājā, saying this
to the princess of Kāśī,

38 My mother, the mahā-auspicious lady,
pretended to smile,
and dismissed her.
That lovely lady refrained
from drinking water sometimes for eight months,
sometimes for ten.

39 And so the king of Kāśī's daughter,
eagerly searching for *tīrthas*,
came to Vatsa-land, tripped,
and flowed down,

40 As a river. It is reported, O Bharata,
the Vatsa-land river Ambā
is zig-zag, inaccessible, swarming with crocodiles,
and monsoon-filled.

41 Rājā, that is how, with half her body,
she became a river
through her tapasyā, and with the other half
remained a girl.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-SEVEN

1 The holy men (continued Bhīṣma)
seeing her intent on tapasyā,
tried to dissuade her, saying,
"What do you aim to do?"

2 The girl replied to the ṛṣi
rich with tapasyā:
"Bhīṣma ruined me, made me worthless
for husband-dharma.

3 O tapasyā-rich ones,
I want nothing in worldly profit.
I will destroy him.
Till then, no peace for me at all.

4 He has made my life one everlasting misery,
prevented me from being husbanded,
made me in this world
neither man nor woman –

5 So until I kill Gaṅgā's son, I will not rest,
O tapasyā-rich ones!
What I say to you,
is what I feel in my heart.

6 I am sick of being a woman!
I want to be a man!
I will take revenge on Bhīṣma
No one will stop me."

7 In the midst of all the mahā-ṛṣis,
the husband of Umā,
trident-wielding Śiva,
appeared before Ambā.

8 He asked her what boon she wanted.
She wanted me defeated.
The god said to the strong-willed girl;
"You will defeat him."

9 She asked Śiva: "I am a woman.
How can it be, O divine one,
that I, on the battlefield,
will defeat powerful Bhīṣma?

10 O lord of Umā, I am a woman,
I am frail-minded.
But you have promised me victory over Bhīṣma,
O lord-of-spirits Bhūteśa!

11 O make that promise come true,
O bull-emblemed god!
Make it so that, fighting Śāntanu's son,
I slay him!

12 Mahādeva-Śiva, who has the bull
as his banner,
said to the girl: "My words are true,
O fortunate lady.

13 You will kill Bhīṣma on the battlefield,
but first you will charges sex
in your next birth. You will recall
your previous birth.

14 You will be born in the family of Drupada,
you will be a mahā-chariot-hero
skilled in war,
a versatile fighter.

15 Fortunate one, what I have said,
will happen.
You will be born female,
but will undergo a sex-change."

16 Saying this, matted-haired Śiva,
the bull-bannered deity,
vanished in front of the eyes
of the assembled Brahmins.

17 The lovely girl of exquisite complexion,
in the sight
of the illustrious mahā-ṛṣis,
gathered forest-wood for fuel,

18 Erected a huge funeral pyre;
her heart aflame with anger,
she set the funeral pyre alight;
then, O mahārāja,

19 Climbing the funeral pyre on the bank
of the river Yamunā, O rājā,
the eldest daughter of the Kāśi king said:
"Destroy Bhīṣma!"

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-EIGHT

1 "Tell me, Pitāmaha," enquired Duryodhana,
"how Śikhaṇḍin,
who was a girl, became a man.
How, O war-valiant son of Gaṅgā?"

2 O Indra-among-rājās (replied Bhīṣma),
the beloved queen
of lord-of-earth Drupada was childless,
O lord of the earth.

3 Seeking offspring, the wise earth ruler Drupada,
O mahārāja,
took great pains to propitiate
Śaṅkara-Śiva.

4 He was bent on my destruction,
and he practised severe tapasyā;
he prayed to Mahādeva-Śiva,
"Let me not have a daughter.

5 *Bhagavan!* Adored one! I need a son
for revenge on Bhīṣma
The god of gods said:
"Your child will be female and male.

6 O lord of earth, return! It cannot be otherwise."
So Drupada
went back to his capital
and said to his wife:

7 "I have worked hard. I have honoured Śambhu-Śiva
with tapasyā,
and he has promised my child
will be first female, then male.

8 I kept pleading for clarification,
but he only replied:
'It is ordained so. It cannot be otherwise.
I have said it.' "

9 The deep-disciplined lady,
the wife of rājā Drupada,
had intercourse with rājā Drupada
during her fertile period,

10 And, as ordained by destiny,
the queen of Drupada conceived.
(It was Nārada, O earth-lord,
who informed me.)

11 The lotus-eyed devī, Drupada's queen,
being pregnant;
her husband, rājā Drupada, to please
his beloved wife, O Kaurava descendant,

12 And because mahā-muscled Drupada desired a son,
ordered all comforts for her.
She obtained from her husband everything
she wanted, O Kaurava.

13 And so, at the proper time, the devī,
the queen
of the heirless lord of the whole earth,
rājā Drupada,

14 The deep-disciplined lady,
O lord of men,
gave birth to a daughter
of absolutely enchanting beauty.

15 O Indra-among-rājās,
rājā Drupada had it proclaimed,
*A son is born,* and concealed the sex
of his daughter.

16 He ordered all a son's birth-rituals
to be performed.
His queen also conspired
to keep the secret,

17 And had it announced, *It is a boy.*
No man other than Pārṣata-Drupada,
in the whole city,
knew the truth.

18 Respecting the words of the god
of limitless glory,
he hid the sex of his daughter, saying,
"It is a boy."

19 The king ordered all the male *jatākarma*
childhood rituals performed
in accordance with the rules
and he named her Śikhaṇḍin.

20 I, through my spies, and through Nārada,
through the words of Śiva,
and the tapasyā of Ambā,
alone knew Śikhaṇḍin was a girl.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-NINE

1 Drupada made his daughter proficient
(continued Bhīṣma)
in everything, specially in literature, painting,
and other fine arts.

2 Mahārāja, she studied the art of archery
under Droṇa.
O Indra-among-rājās,
the girl's exquisitely lovely mother

3 Insisted that the king find a husband
for her daughter!
When she reached the age of puberty,
king Drupada
and his wife felt anxious, for she was still
very much a girl.

4 Drupada said: "She's of age now,
and my sorrow increases.
I believed Śiva and have succeeded so far
in concealing her identity."

5 "Mahārāja, his word can never be false,"
replied his wife.
"How can the Maker of the three worlds
utter a lie?

6 O rājā, listen to what I have to say.
After listening,
the descendant of Pṛṣata
may decide for himself.

7 It is my firm belief that the god's words
will prove true.
So let our child take a wife,
as it is prescribed."

8 Deciding between themselves accordingly,
the royal couple
chose, as a bride for Śikhaṇḍin,
the daughter of rājā Dāśārṇa.

9 So Drupada-rājā,
that lion-brave rājā,
approving the lineage,
selected the daughter
of rājā Dāśārṇa
as wife of Śikhaṇḍin.

10 The king of Dāśārṇa, known as Hiraṇyavarman
the Golden-Armoured One,
a great lord of the earth,
gave his daughter to Śikhaṇḍin.

11 Hiraṇyavarman of Dāśārṇa
was a powerful, invincible rājā.
He was a mahā-minded man
with a mahā-army.

12 Soon after the wedding,
his daughter attained her youth;
the other daughter, Śikhaṇḍin,
had already come of age.

13 Śikhaṇḍin, after marriage,
returned to the city of Kāmpilya.
In a few days, Śikhaṇḍin's bride
discovered the truth.

14 Hiraṇyavarman's daughter,
discovering Śikhaṇḍin was a girl,
filled with shame, reported to her attendants
and *sakhīs*
the truth about Śikhaṇḍin,
so-called son of rājā Drupada.

15 O tiger brave rājā!
The attendants were deeply distressed
and quickly sent messengers
to the king of Dāśārṇa.

16 The messengers informed
the lord of Dāśārṇa-land
of the deception played on his daughter.
He was furious.

17 Indeed, mahārāja, Śikhaṇḍin himself,
in the court,
strutted about like a male,
hiding all feminine signs.

18 A few days passed. O Indra-among-rājās,
O bull-brave Bharata,
verifying Śikhaṇḍin's behaviour,
Hiraṇyavarman seethed with rage.

19 Burning with uncontrollable fury,
the rājā of Dāśārṇa
despatched an ambassador
to the palace of Drupada.

20 The ambassador of the gold-armoured king
sought audience
with king Drupada in private,
and said these words to him:

21 "O defectless rājā, deceived by you,
and angry and insulted
by the deception, the Dāśārṇa rājā sends
this message:

22 'You have demeaned me.
What kind of foolishness is this
to have my daughter married
to your daughter?

23 The fruit of your deception will now be yours,
wicked king.
I will destroy you, your friends, relatives,
and courtiers. Be ready!' "

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY

1 O king! These were the words
of the ambassador to Drupada,
(said Bhīṣma), who stood there like a thief,
not saying a word.

2 He tried hard to heal the relationship
by sending messengers
who would sweetly and gently tell the king,
"It is not so."

3 But Hiraṇyavarman, upon further investigation,
knew for certain
that Drupada's child was a daughter,
and quickly made up his mind.

4 Relying on the words of the attendants,
he informed all his powerful friends
of the deception practised
on his daughter.

5 That excellent rājā assembled an enormous army,
O Bharata,
for the sole purpose of leading an expedition
against Drupada.

6 O Indra-among-rājās,
the earth-lord Hiraṇyavarman consulted
his ministers regarding the measures to be taken
against Drupada.

7 The mahātmā rājās unanimously
came to this decision:
"If it is really true that Śikhaṇḍin is a girl,
O rājā,

8 We will capture the rājā of the Pāñcālas,
drag him here,
and see that another king is installed
in his place.

9 We will kill Drupada.
We will kill Śikhaṇḍin."

10 Once they had come to this decision,
he ordered
fresh messengers sent to Drupada:
"Be warned. Your death is near."

11 In those days, Drupada
was a peace-loving king,
certainly not a very brave one.
He was terrified by the message.

12 He sent his own messengers
to the king of Dāśārṇa.
Panicking with grief, he spoke to his wife,
in secret.

13 The Pāñcāla rājā was filled with fear.
His heart
was weak with grief when he told
Śikhaṇḍin's mother:

14 "Our in-law, king Hiraṇyavarman,
has gathered an army –
a powerful striking force –
and is angrily advancing here.

15 What fools we have been!
What do we do now?
Your son Śikhaṇḍin is suspected
of being a girl.

16 This suspicion works on Hiraṇyavarman.
*I have been fooled,*
he thinks, and deploys army and allies
to kill me.

17 Lovely lady, graceful-hipped beauty!
What is right, what wrong?
Tell me. I will act only
after you have advised me.

18 I am in great danger.
So is our daughter Śikhaṇḍinī.
O exquisite-complexioned lady,
you too are in danger.

19 Help us all. What is the truth?
Sweet-smiling and lovely-hipped one,
everything depends
on what you say.

20 Do not be afraid. Don't let Śikhaṇḍinī
be afraid.
Though deprived of son-dharma,
I will act out of kindness.

21 The lord of the earth, rājā Dāśārṇa
was tricked by me.
O mahā-fortune-favoured lady, say something
that will benefit us all!"

22 Addressed publicly in this way by Drupada
who wished to proclaim
his innocence before others (though he knew all),
the devī spoke.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-ONE

1 O mahā-muscled king (continued Bhīṣma),
Śikhaṇḍinī's mother
gave her husband the true facts
about her daughter Śikhaṇḍinī

2 "I was childless, O rājā, and so,
fearing the taunts of my co-wives.
I gave out that Śikhaṇḍinī
was a son.

3 You loved me, and you approved it.
O finest of men, O bull-brave lord,
the rituals of a son were performed
for this daughter.

4 I agreed to it, and you, O rājā,
decided to get a wife for her.
I recalled the words of Śiva,
'Born female, she will be male.'
So we anticipated
no problems."

5 Hearing this, Drupada
informed all his courtiers,
and summoned a meeting.
He did this, O rājā,
in order to see
to his subjects' protection.

6 Though he was involved
in deceiving Dāśārṇa,
he made his plans
with deep concentration,
to see that relations
would remain amicable.

7 Though it was naturally well-defended,
he further fortified his capital
against any attack,
O Bharata Indra-among-rājās.

8 But the continuing friction with the Dāśārṇa king,
O bull-brave Bharata,
was a source of anxiety to rājā Drupada
and his queen.

9 *How do I get rid of this threat of war
between in-law relatives?* –
This worry made him pay reverence
to the gods.

10 Seeing her husband paying reverence
to the gods in this fashion,
his wife, the devī,
said to him:

11 "In prosperous times, homage to the gods
is recommended by good men.
In oceanic grief, even more so.
Honour your gurus and elders.

12 Offer pūjā to the gods
with generous *dakṣiṇā* to Brahmins.
Let sacred fires be lit
to pacify the Dāśārṇa king.

13 My lord, plan out a way of reconciliation,
without any war.
All this is possible,
through the grace of the gods.

14 O large-eyed king,
steps to defend the city
have been implemented,
as advised by your ministers.

15 With human effort, and faith in the gods,
success is sure!
When these two are not in harmony, my lord,
no success is possible.

16 Plan to defend the city as advised
by your ministers,
and offer, O lord of the earth,
reverence to the gods."

17 Seeing the two conversing sadly
with each other,
the girl-of-tapasyā Śikhaṇḍin
was struck with shame.

18 She thought: *I am the cause of the grief
of my parents.*
She decided then and there
to take her own life.

19 Her mind made up,
she sorrowfully left her house
and went away to a distant
and unpeopled forest.

20 O rājā, that forest was the abode
of a rich yakṣa
named Sthūṇākarṇa. For fear of him,
no man came there.

21 In it was Sthūṇākarṇa's commodious
lime-washed mansion,
with high walls and a gate,
smelling of frying paddy.

22 The daughter of Drupada, Śikhaṇḍinī,
entered the house,
bent on emaciating and eventually
starving herself to death.

23 A kind yakṣa, Sthūṇākarṇa introduced himself,
saying:
"Why are you doing this? Tell me quickly.
I will help you."

24 She kept repeating: "You cannot. You cannot."
But the yakṣa persisted,
and answered her, saying,
"Yes, I can do it.

25 Princess, I attend on the god of wealth,
I can grant boons;
I can accomplish even the impossible.
What do you wish?"

26 O Bharata, to Sthūṇākarṇa,
the chief of the yakṣas,
Śikhaṇḍin narrated her story
in every detail.

27 "O yakṣa, my son-less father," she said,
"will soon perish,
because the lord of the Dāśārṇas
is advancing against him.

28 That golden-armoured king is enterprising
and mahā-powerful.
Save me, O yakṣa,
and save my father and mother.

29 You promised to remove my grief.
O perfect one,
grant me your grace –
grant that I become a man!

30 O mahā-yakṣa! Let me remain a man
until the rājā of Dāśārṇa
abandons his aggressive acts on my city.
Grant me your grace, O Guhyaka!"

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-TWO

1 O bull-brave Bharata (continued Bhīṣma)
the yakṣa heard
the plaint of fate-afflicted Śikhaṇḍinī
and gravely said:

2 "It will pain me to do so,
but fate has decreed it so.
Good girl, I will grant your wish,
on one condition.

3 I will exchange my male organ
for your womanhood,
and for a limited period. When it expires,
you will return my liṅgam.
You must give me
your word of honour on this.

4 I am a lord who makes everything possible.
I can fly, and roam as I please.
My boon will save
your city and friends.

5 I will transfer your sex on myself,
O princess.
But first, your word –
before I grant your dear desire."

6 "O true-vowed one," said Śikhaṇḍinī,
"night-wanderer, I give my word,
revered one, *bhagavan*, to return your manhood;
take my womanhood in this brief exchange.

7 When the Dāśārṇa king departs,
the gold-armoured hero,
I will revert to womanhood,
and you to manhood."

8 This was the agreement between them
(Bhīṣma continued)
concerning the convenient transfer
of each other's sex.

9 Then Sthūṇākarṇa took on himself
her female organ, O Bharata,
and Śikhaṇḍinī radiated
with the yakṣa's glowing male member.

10 O earth-lord! Transformed into a male,
the Pāñcāla prince Śikhaṇḍin
returned to the city
and joyfully went to his father.

11 He narrated accurately all
that had transpired,
and Drupada was supremely delighted
with Śikhaṇḍin's sex-transformation.

12 He and his wife remembered the words
of Maheśvara-Śiva.
He quickly sent a message
to the king of Dāśārṇa:

13 "My child is a male. Believe this!"
In the meantime,
the rājā of the Dāśārṇas
launched a surprise attack

14 On the rājā of Pāñcāla,
because revenge had overpowered him.
He succeeded in reaching Kāmpilya;
then the Dāśārṇa lord

15 Despatched an excellent Brahma-knowing
messenger to Drupada, saying:
"Repeat these words of mine
to the king of the Pāñcālas:

16 'Wicked-minded one, you married my daughter
to your daughter.
You will soon have to swallow
the fruit of that infamy."

17 O finest of rājās!
The Brahmin messenger of the Dāśārṇa king
rushed as fast as he could to Drupada
in the city of Kāmpilya.

18 The *purohita* messenger entered Drupada's capital;
the Pāñcāla rājā
gifted a cow to him
and offered him *arghya*-respect.

19 Śikhaṇḍin was present at that time.
O Indra-among-rājās,
the messenger declined to accept the pūjā-respect,
and said instead,

20 Repeating the words
of the heroic golden-armoured rājā:
"Wickedly-behaving one, you deceived me
concerning your daughter.

21 Receive now, therefore,
the fruit of your heinous deed.
I challenge you to battle today,
O wicked-minded king.

22 I will wipe out your ministers, family,
and friends."
The king listened to the consequences
of his insult,

23 Spoken by the Dāśārṇa king's *purohita*
in the presence of his courtiers,
but he replied, O excellent Bharata,
in a friendly tone:

24 "Brahmin! My reply to the words of my relative
that you have brought to me,
will be taken to him
by a special messenger."

25 King Drupada ordered a Brahmin
Veda-wise messenger
to be despatched to the golden-armoured
mahātmā rājā.

26 O king, he hurried
to the rājā of Dāśārṇa,
and repeated before him
the reply of Drupada:

27 "Conduct an enquiry.
The prince, my child, is a son.
Someone has lied to you.
You should not have believed it."

28 Disturbed by the message
of Drupada, the rājā
despatched betwitchingly
beautiful girls
to see if Śikhaṇḍin
was a man or a woman.

29 The girls discovered
the fact of the matter,
that Śikhaṇḍin was virile,
O Kaurava-Indra,
and reported the truth
to rājā Dāśārṇa.

30 Satisfied with the result of his test,
rājā Dāśārṇa
went to his daughter's father-in-law
and stayed with him happily.

31 The great earth-lord joyfully presented
wealth, elephants,
horses, cattle, and countless slave-maids
to Śikhaṇḍin.

32 After accepting the pūjā-respect
and scolding his daughter, he left.
With the departure of the reconciled,
golden-armoured
king Hemavarman-Hiraṇyavarman,
Śikhaṇḍin felt relieved.

33 It so happened that some time later,
Kubera, borne on human shoulders,
happened to visit
Sthūṇākarṇa's abode.

34 Roaming in the mansion,
the guardian of wealth
immediately noticed
a profusion of garlands,
delightfully varied,
in the yakṣa's dwelling,

35 And roots aromatic
with the sweetest incense,
and colourful flags,
and abundance of food
and plentiful drinks
and similar luxuries.

36 Seeing all the magnificent decorations,
seeing everywhere
garlands studded with gems and gold
and diamonds,

37 Perfumed with flowery fragrances,
all well-watered and well-swept,
the yakṣa-lord said
to the attendant yakṣas:

38 "Sthūṇākarṇa's mansion is a place
of exquisite beauty.
Tell me, brave followers,
why doesn't the fool come to meet me?

39 He knows I am here.
He must be very wicked-ātmaned.
He deserves to be severely punished.
I think he does."

40 The yakṣa replied: "Rājā,
Drupada had a daughter Śikhaṇḍini.
Sthūṇākarṇa, for some reason,
has exchanged his manhood for her womanhood.

41 So he stays inside the mansion,
because he is now female.
The reason he hasn't come to greet you
is he feels ashamed.

42 That is the only explanation
for his not greeting you, O rājā.
Now you know. Do what is proper.
Leave your chariot here."

43 The lord of the yakṣas
said again and again;
"Summon Sthūṇākarṇa here!
I will punish him."

44 O lord of the earth, he was brought
before the Indra-of-the-yakṣas.
and, because he was a girl, mahārāja,
he stood there, shamefaced.

45 The granter of wealth angrily cursed him,
O Kuru descendant:
"Let this scoundrel forever remain
a woman then!"

46 The lord of the yakṣas,
the mahātmā repeated:
"By this transfer of sex
you have shamed all the yakṣas!
A giggling female!
A despicable yakṣa!

47 You utterly wicked-minded one,
since you have done what no one did before,
you will remain a woman all your life,
and she a man."

48 The yakṣas tried to appease Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera,
for the sake of Sthūṇākarṇa,
pleading,
"Please modify your curse."

49 *Tāta*! Dear one! The mahātmā Indra-of-the-yakṣas
then said to all
his yakṣa-followers,
as a modification of his curse:

50 "O mahā-minded yakṣas, when Śikhaṇḍin dies,
Sthūṇākarṇa will recover his manhood.
Let him not despair
too much, therefore!"

51 *Bhagavan* Kubera, the rājā of the yakṣas,
saying this,
accepted their pūjā-respect,
and left the place in a flash.

52 Sthūṇākarṇa stayed on in his abode,
with the curse.
In course of time Śikhaṇḍin came
to the yakṣa's mansion.

53 He approached, and said:
"Revered one, *bhagavan,* I am here."
Sthūṇākarṇa said to him:
"I am pleased, I am pleased."

54 Because the prince Śikhaṇḍin
had turned up voluntarily,
Sthūṇākarṇa told him all that had taken place
in the meantime.

55 "It is indeed your fault, prince,
that Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera cursed me.
Go now, and live happily on earth,"
the yakṣa said, adding:

56 "I believe that all this was destined,
and it cannot be changed –
your coming here,
and Paulastya-Kubera coming here."

57 Taking leave of the yakṣa (Bhīṣma said),
Śikhaṇḍin returned to the capital.
He was filled with
ecstatic mahā-joy.

58 He offered lavish pūjā,
consisting of perfumes and garlands,
to the gods, Brahmins,
sacred trees and crossroads.

59 King Drupada of the Pāñcālas participated
in the great joy
of his son Śikhaṇḍin who had got his wish.
So did his friends.

60 O bull-brave Kaurava mahārāja,
he entrusted his son Śikhaṇḍin, once a girl,
as a pupil
in the care of guru Droṇa.

61 The king's son Śikhaṇḍin learnt
the fourfold skills –
receiving, holding, wielding, repulsing –
of arms-combat,
as did you
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna of the Pṛṣatas.

62 But I had spies posing as idiots,
or as blind and deaf men,
who reported to me
all that happened.

63 This is the story, mahārāja,
of how the son of Drupada
is both man and woman.
He is the chariot-hero Śikhaṇḍin.

64 And that is how the eldest daughter Ambā,
of the Kāśī lord,
O bull-brave Bharata, was born in Drupada's family
as Śikhaṇḍin.

65 I will not even for an instant look at him.
Bow in hand,
though he attack me in battle,
I refuse to fight him.

66 This is my vow. The whole world knows –
on women, on erstwhile women,
on those with women's names,
on those looking like women,

67 I will not use my weapons!
O Kaurava-descendant,
that is the reason I absolutely refuse
to kill Śikhaṇḍin.

68 *Tāta*! Dear one! I know the truth
about the birth of Śikhaṇḍin;
armed though he be,
I will not kill him in battle.

69 If Bhīṣma kills a woman,
all good men will condemn him.
Even if he faces me on the battlefield,
I will not kill him.

70 Rājā Duryodhana thought this over
(said Vaiśampāyana),
and concluded that Bhīṣma's decision
was worthy of Bhīṣma.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-THREE

1 Night passed, and the day dawned
(said Sañjaya),
and your son Duryodhana on the field
asked Bhīṣma:

2 "Gaṅgā's son, this army of the Pāṇḍavas,
eager to fight,
with its foot-soldiers, mahā-chariot-heroes,
and elephants,

3 Flanked by such skilled mahā-bowmen
as Bhīma and Arjuna,
led by Dhṛṣṭadyumna –
all of them like Lokapālas –

4 An army incapable of suffering defeat,
an onrushing,
billowing ocean-army,
which even gods cannot vanquish –

5 How long, O mahā-radiant son of Gaṅgā,
will it take you to annihilate it?
How long for mahā-powerful Kṛpa
and mahā-archer ācārya Droṇa to do likewise?

6 Or Karṇa, who delights in battle?
Or Droṇa's son,
finest of the twice-born Aśvatthāman?
All of you possess supernatural weapons.

7 I am eager to know this.
Brimming is this great curiosity in my heart.
O mahā-muscled one,
tell me everything."

8 "Finest of Kauravas, it is right of you,"
replied Bhīṣma,
"to enquire about the strength and weakness
of your enemies, O earth lord.

9 Let me tell you, rājā, of my supreme śakti,
by which I refer
to the power of my weapons
and my two mahā-powerful arms.

10 A simple antagonist should be fought
with simple means,
and a mayā-maker with māyā.
This is what dharma says.

11 I could wipe out the army of the Pāṇḍavas
by so dividing the day
that I fight only
in the morning.

12 O mahā-radiant one, I could take as my share
ten thousand foot-soldiers
and also ten thousand
chariot-warriors.

13 Dressed in armour and battling systematically
day by day, O Bharata,
I could wipe out the Pāṇḍava mahā-army
in a calculable period.

14 If, on the other hand, I use my mighty weapons,
I can kill at one stroke
hundreds of thousands,
needing in all about a month, O Bharata."

15 O Indra-among-rājās, rājā Duryodhana
heard this estimate of Bhīṣma and,
turning to Droṇa, (continued Sañjaya)
he put this question:

16 "Ācārya, how long will it take you
to wipe out
the army of the Pāṇḍavas?"
Droṇa smiled, and replied:

17 "O mahā-muscled one, I am now old,
and my prowess is not
what it once was.
My weapons could burn the Pāṇḍavas,

18 I think, in about the same time
as Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma said he could –
a month. That is the extreme extent
of my supreme śakti."

19 Śaradvat's son Kṛpa replied: "Two months."
And Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
promised to destroy the Pāṇḍavas
in ten nights.

20 Karṇa, with the use of his mahā-weapons,
said five days.
Listening to Karṇa make this promise
Bhīṣma the ocean-seeking river's son,

21 Laughed loudly and said:
"So long as Pārtha-Arjuna,
on the battlefield, carrying bow and conch,
and other weapons,

22 Riding under Vāsudeva-Krishna's guidance –
so long as you don't have to face him,
feel free to make large promises,
Rādheya-Karṇa.
You are free to say anything you like,
anything you like."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-FOUR

1 Being informed of all this
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira summoned his brothers,
and gravely said:

2 "My spies in the army
of the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
brought me the following intelligence
this morning:

3 Duryodhana asked the maha-rigid-vowed son
of the river Gaṅgā: '*Prabhu!* Lord!
How long will it take you to wipe out
the Pāṇḍava army?'

4 The ill-minded son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
got this reply:
'A month.' Droṇa also promised destruction
in a month.

5 I learn that Kṛpa has promised it
in two months,
and Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman, using mahā-weapons,
in ten days.

6 Karṇa, with the use of supernatural weapons,
has promised
to wipe out the Pāṇḍavas and their army
in five days.

7 Tell me, Arjuna, what are your views
in this matter?
How long will it take you
to destroy our enemies, O Phālguna?"

8 Questioned in this way, curly-haired Arjuna,
known as Guḍākeśa,
glanced in the direction of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
and replied:

9 "Mahārāja, they are all mahātmā heroes,
expert in warfare
and in varied combat,
and they can do what they promise.

10 But do not let that be a cause
for any anxiety.
With Vāsudeva-Krishna's help, I can destroy,
from my chariot,

11 The three worlds with all the gods,
all animate life –
inanimate life too – all in a flash.
I know this.

12 The fiercely awesome weapon
that Paśupati-Śiva gave to me
after I, as a hunter, duelled with him,
is in my possession.

13 O tiger-brave one! The weapon that Paśupati-Śiva,
uses to annihilate
all life at the end of a yuga,
is in my possession.

14 Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma does not know this,
nor does Droṇa nor Gautama-Kṛpa.
Certainly Karṇa does not know of it,
O rājā.

15 It is not right, however,
to use supernatural weapons
to wipe out ordinary men.
Simple warfare will suffice.

16 Consider also these tiger-brave men
who are your allies.
All are familiar with supernatural weapons
and are eager to fight.

17 After their Veda-initiation,
all of them took sacred baths;
they have never known defeat;
they can defeat even gods, O Pāṇḍava.

18 Śikhaṇḍin, Yuyudhāna, Dhṛṣṭadyumna of Pṛṣata,
Bhīma, the twins, Yudhāmanyu, Uttamaujas,

19 Virāṭa and Drupada (who equal Bhīṣma and Droṇa)
Mahā-muscled Śaṅkha and mahā-powerful
Haiḍimbā-Ghaṭotkaca,

20 And his son Añjanparvan, who is mahā-valiant,
And the mahā-powerful Śini Sātyaki, your close ally;

21 Mighty Abhimanyu, Draupadi's five sons are yours.
By yourself you can annihilate the three worlds.

22 You whose radiance equals that of Śakra-Indra!
That person dies
on whom you look angrily. I know this,
I have seen it, O Kaurava."

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-FIVE

1 Next morning, under a clear sky
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
all the rājās, urged by Duryodhana,
marched against Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira.

2 Bathed and purified and garlanded
and dressed in white,
they lit the sacred fires, received *svasti*-blessings,
and brandished their weapons.

3 All were Veda-wise heroes,
all keepers of their vows;
all could do as they pleased,
all showed battle-scars.

4 All were eager to obtain the glory
of the next world;
they trusted each other, they had courage, power,
and determination.

5 From Avantī, Vinda and Anuvinda; Kekayas, Bāhlīkas,
All marching, led by Bharadvāja's son Droṇa;

6 Aśvatthāman; Śāntanu's son, Jayadratha of the Sindhus;
Kings from the south and the west and the hilly regions;

7 The Gāndhāra-rājā Śākuni; northerners; easterners;
and others; Śakas; Kirātas; Yavanas; Śibis; Vasātis;

8 All with their armies, protected the mahā-chariot-
heroes;
All the mahā-chariot-heroes formed the second
division.

9 Kṛtavarman and his army; the mahā-chariot-hero
Trigarta;
King Duryodhana, assisted by all his brothers;

10 Śala; Bhūriśravas; Śalya; Bṛhadratha of the Kosalas;–
These formed the rear. Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons marched
in front.

11 These followers of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's powerful son,
united and dressed in armour,
took up battle stations at one end
of Kurukṣetra.

12 Duryodhana ordered his base camp
to be so constructed,
O Bharata, as to resemble a splendidly-ornamented
second Hastināpura.

13 O Indra-among-rājās,
even the most discerning citizens
failed to see any difference
between the encampment and Hastināpura.

14 The lord-of-earth Kaurava ordered similar
invulnerable camps
to be constructed in hundreds and thousands
for the rājās.

15 The total area of the base camp
was a maṇḍala of five *yojanas*;
within it soldiers in hundreds
made sub-camps.

16 The lords of the earth,
according to the strength and skill of each
took charge of the hundreds
of military camps.

17 Rājā Duryodhana issued orders for the supply
of excellent provisions
for his mahātmā allies and their armies –
for foot-soldiers,

18 Elephants, horses, and others.
The experienced upkeep specialists,
the bards, chanters, and professional panegyrists
who were present,

19 The merchants, prostitutes, secret agents,
and curious spectators –
the Kaurava rājā ordered their needs
carefully attended to.

## SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETY-SIX

1 Similar arrangements were made (said Vaiśampāyana)
by Dharma's son by Kuntī, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
for the armies
under Dhṛṣṭadyumna's command.

2 He ordered the leaders of the Cedis, Kāśīs, Karuṣas,
Enormously powerful and foe-slaying Dhṛṣṭaketu,

3 Virāṭa, Drupada, Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki, Śikhaṇḍin,
The mahā-bowman Yudhāmanyu and Uttamraujas,
to advance.

4 Wearing different battle-armours,
ornamented with gold ear-rings,
those warriors shone like sacred fires
fed with ghee.

5 The mahā-bowmen shone with the glory
of stars in the sky.
After offering pūjā-respect to the army,
the bull-brave hero,

6 The earth-lord, ordered it to advance.
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
ordered for his mahātmā warriors,
consisting of foot-soldiers,

7 Elephants, horses and others,
including the upkeep specialists,
the finest provisions that would satisfy
all their needs.

8 Pāṇḍu's son ordered Abhimanyu, Bṛhanta,
the five sons of Draupadī,
all commanded by Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
to advance.

9 The second division of the army
was ordered by Yudhiṣṭhira
to advance under Bhīma, Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki,
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

10 The din and bustle of the soldiers
as they put on their war-gear
with cheerful shouts,
shook the sky.

11 Finally, the lord of the earth
positioned himself
in the rear of the army,
along earth-lords Virāṭa and Drupada.

12 That army of absolutely fierce archers,
led by Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
moved about, like Gaṅgā's waves,
sometimes unruffled, sometimes swollen.

13 Yudhiṣṭhira cleverly made last-moment changes
in the formation of the ranks,
to confuse the shrewd sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

14 Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira ordered the five brave archer-
sons of Drupadī,
Abhimanyu, Nakula, Sahadeva, and Prabhadrakas,

15 Ten thousand horses, two thousand elephants,
Ten thousand foot-soldiers, five hundred chariots,

16 To be the army's first division, under Bhīma's
command.
Pāṇḍu's son ordered the centre under Virāṭa and
Jayatsena,

17 And the two mahā-chariot-heroes, Pāñcāla's Yudhāmanyu
and Uttamaujas,
Both of them mahātmā warriors, expert archers and
club-wielders.

18 The centre was also assisted by Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
All these were men burning with anger,
experienced in war.

19 In addition, they had twenty thousand
magnificent cavalry,
and five thousand elephants and chariots
to support them.

20 There were foot-soldiers,
armed with bows, swords, maces –
thousands in the vanguard,
and thousands in the rear.

21 Within that overflowing ocean of soldiers
was Yudhiṣṭhira,
surrounded by a large number
of lords of the earth.

22 Supporting him were thousands of elephants,
tens of thousands of cavalry
and thousands of chariots
and foot-soldiers.

23 O bull-brave earth-lord!
Cekitāna came with his own huge army;
there was also Dhṛṣṭaketu,
the leader of the Cedis.

24 And there was Sātyaki, the mahā-bowman,
the incomparable chariot-hero of the Vṛṣṇis,
with hundreds and thousands
of chariots.

25 The two excellent bull-brave warriors,
Kṣatradeva and Brahmadeva,
stationed in their chariots,
guarded the rear.

26 In the rear were carts, mobile supply vans,
vehicles, beasts of burden,
thousands of elephants
and tens of thousands of horses,
and children and women,
the sick and the weak.

27 King Yudhiṣṭhira advanced, with his animals
carrying his equipment
and his food-supplies, guarded by a host
of elephants.

28 Following him was Sucitta's irresistible
firm-in-truth son,
And Śreṇimān, Vāsudāna,
and the Kāśi king's son Vibhu.

29 They followed him
with twenty thousand chariots
and ten crores of horses
with bells on their necks,

30 And twenty thousand elephants
with tusks like ploughs,
of noble breed, streaming temples,
looking like cloud masses.

31 In addition, Yudhiṣṭhira
had ten thousand elephants
in each of the seven divisions of his army;
these elephants,

32 With rutting juices
trickling down their temples,
followed the rājā wherever he marched,
for protection.

33 Such was the massive conglomeration
of military might
under Kuntī's wise son, poised to make battle
with Duryodhana.

34 Even more: there were hundreds and thousands
and tens of thousands
of reinforcements, loudly-shouting men,
who accompanied Yudhiṣṭhira.

35 Bursting with eagerness, all these men,
tens of thousands, beat thousands of drums
and blew tens of thousands
of war-conches.

## CORRECTIONS

The following śloka (#17) is missing from Volume II
(the Sabhā Parva, p. 412) : Section 65:

Śakuni said:
"Mādrī's sons, dear to you,
now belong to us.
It seems, Yudhiṣṭhira,
you love Arjuna and Bhīma
more than you love them."

Consequently, ślokas 17, 18, 19, 20 in Volume II (pp. 412-413)
should be marked as 18, 19, 20, 21.

[I am grateful to Pradip Bhattacharya for spotting an inexcusable error in the Vana Parva (Volume III, p. 1253, Section 280, śloka 71. Sītā does not run in the direction of the *south*, but of the north (*uttara*), because the south is the direction of Yama, preferred by Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa.]

This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari alphabet is followed in this Transcreation.

VOWELS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Guttaral* | अ | आ |
| | a | ā |
| *Palatal* | इ | ई |
| | i | ī |
| *Labial* | उ | ऊ |
| | u | ū |
| *Dental* | ऋ | |
| | ṛ | |
| *Guttaral-Palatal* | ए | ऐ |
| | e | ei |
| *Guttaral-Labial* | ओ | औ |
| | o | au |

CONSONANTS

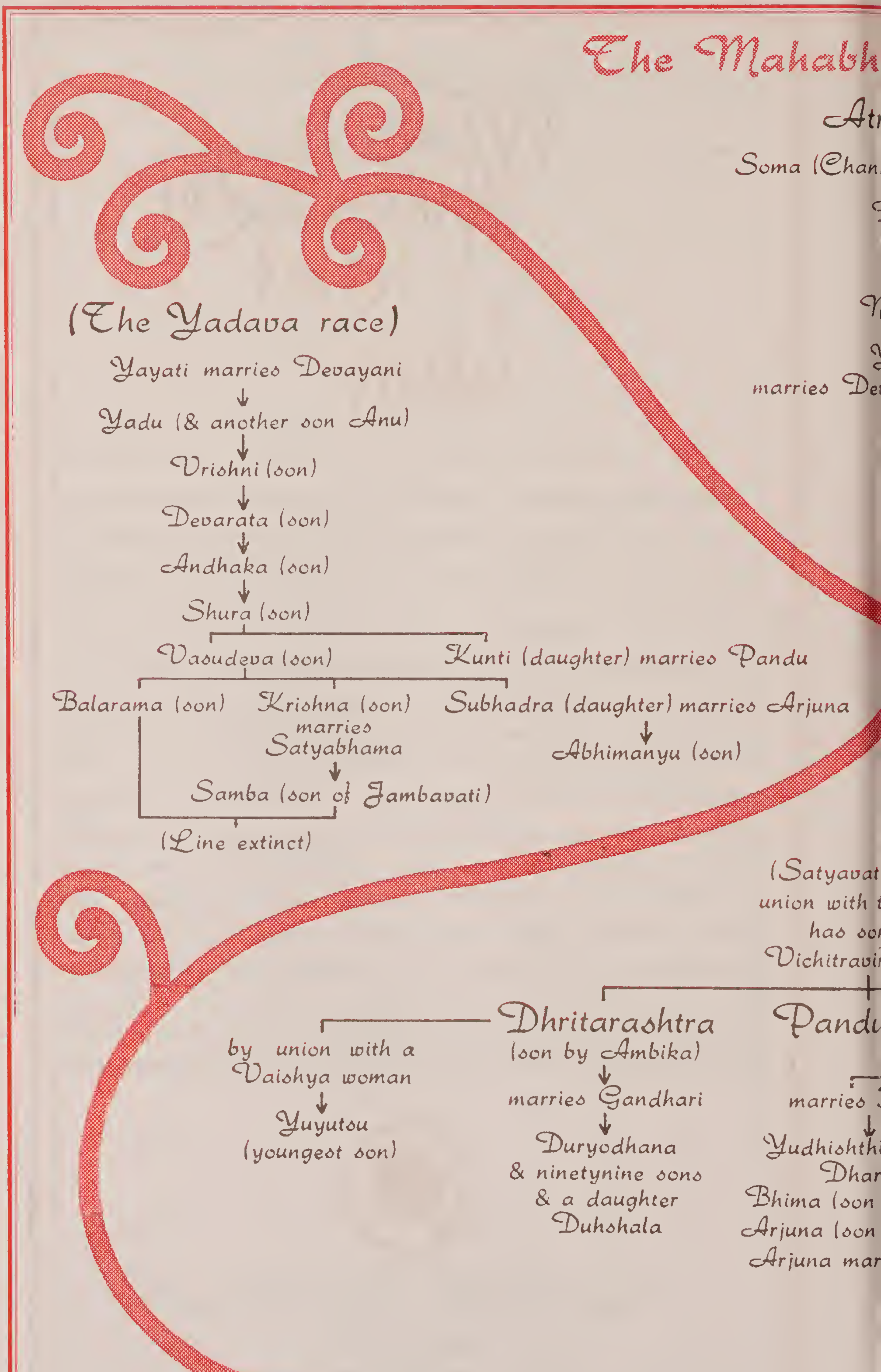
| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Guttaral* | क | ख | ग | घ | ङ | ह | : |
| | k | kh | g | gh | ṅ | h | ḥ |
| *Palatal* | च | छ | ज | झ | ञ | य | श |
| | c | ch | j | jh | ñ | y | ś |
| *Lingual* | ट | ठ | ड | ढ | ण | र | ष |
| | ṭ | ṭh | ḍ | ḍh | ṇ | r | ṣ |
| *Dental* | त | थ | द | ध | न | ल | स |
| | t | th | d | dh | n | l | s |
| *Labial* | प | फ | ब | भ | म | व | |
| | p | ph | b | bh | m | v | |

Anusvara = ṁ

Vyāsa Mahābhārata Kathā Library

VYĀSA MAHĀBHĀRATĀ KATHĀ LIBRARY

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa is a cornucopious treasure house of stories. WRITERS WORKSHOP is bringing out a series of kathās from the mahā-epic, in the śloka-by-śloka English transcreation by P. Lāl. Each volume will carry a brief (around 800 words) synopsis of the tale and information about its protagonists. Most of the volumes will also have a preface by Pradip Bhattacharya (again brief, around 1,000 words) on the "deeper meaning" of each kathā, concerning its symbolism, myth and metaphoric interpretation. The Scaffolding and the Significance – in this two pronged presentation WRITERS WORKSHOP plans to explore, through Vyāsa's imagination and itihāsa-retelling, the riches of the ancient Indian tradition of Suta story-weaving. Story and history, tale and detail, vision and revision coalesce in this entertaining and illuminating journey through a civilisation that communicated lasting values and ideals by vivid oral means. All the volumes are scheduled for publication in 2007. Special Advance Subscription for all 12 volume: Rs 2400.




Sketch by Srimati Lal

# Family Tree

ishi

u) the Moon

u)

Sharmishtha

## (The Paurava & Kaurava race)

Yayati marries Sharmishtha

↓

Puru (& 2 other sons, Druhyu & Turvasu)

↓

Dushyanta (son) marries Shakuntala

↓

Bharata (son)

↓

Hastin (son)

↓

Kuru (son)

↓

Shantanu (son) marries Satyavati

-marriage union with Ganga

↓

Bhishma (son)

sa

ier pre-marriage
arashara: Vyasa
wo widows of
ka & Ambalika)

Chitrangada
(son) (dies childless)

Vichitravirya (son)
marries Ambika & Ambalika
(their eldest sister Amba,
reborn male as Shikhandin,
kills Bhishma in the war)

mbalika)

Vidura (son by
low caste woman)

nd

Madri

↓

Nakula & Sahadeva
(twin sons by Ashvins)

dra

yu (son) marries Uttara

↓

Parikshit (son)

↓

Janamejaya (son)



The Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata

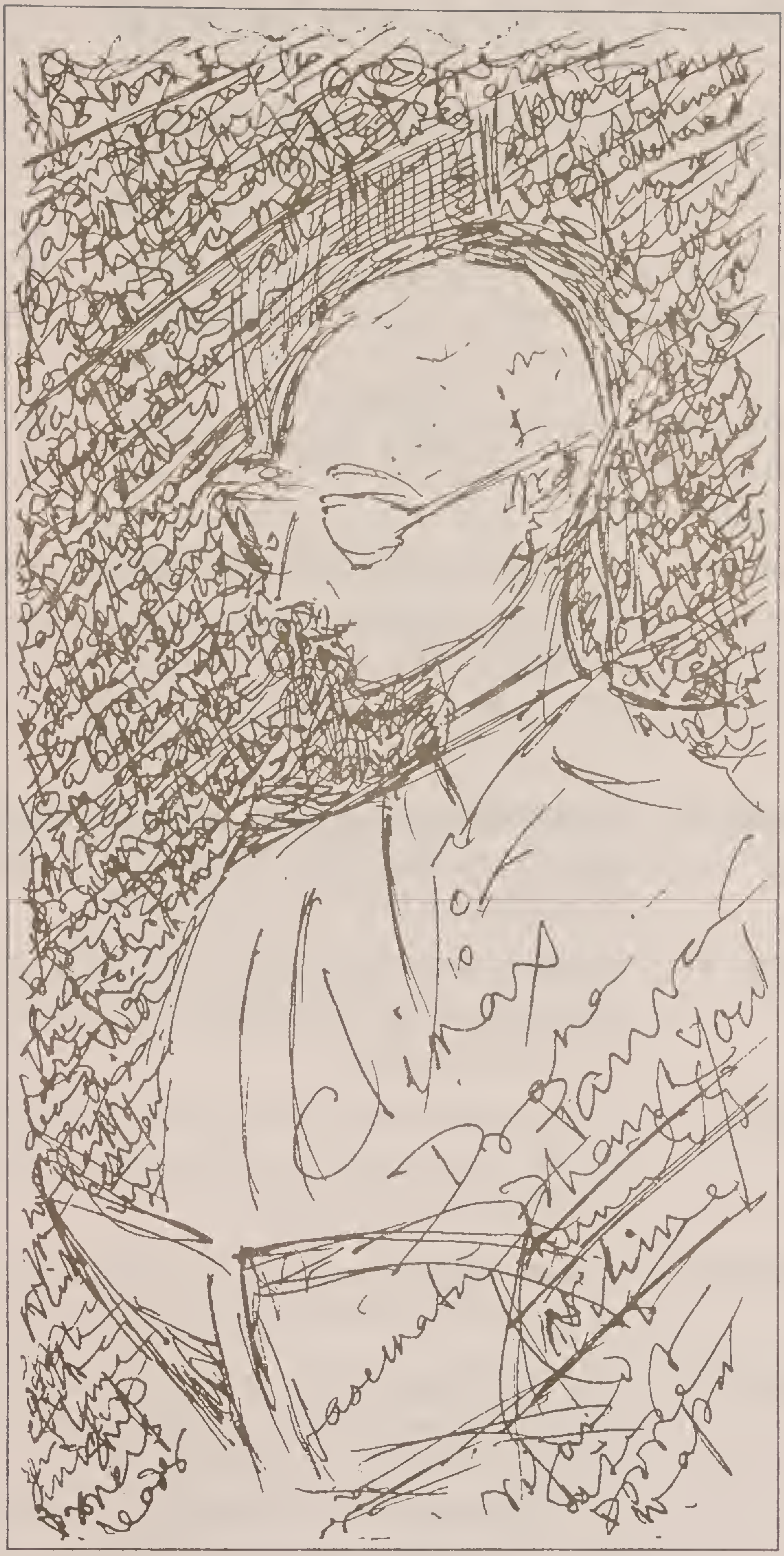
The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

*TRANSCREATED BY P. LAL*

The Mahābhārata

*OF VYASA*

The evolution of wrap-around title-flaps of P. Lāl's monthly Mahābhārata fascicules of the Sabhā Parva that appeared from WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1969-1970 as hardbound volumes 27-37.



P. Lāl reading the 334th weekly Sunday session of his English transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata on 2 July 2006 at G. D. Birla Sabhagar, Kolkata.

[*Sketch by Nilima Sen-Gangopadhyay*]

# C O N T E N T S

## CANTO V

### *Udyogaparva*
The Book of Planning

| | |
|---|---|
| Chapter 56 | *Abhiniyarṇaparva* [only in Cr. Ed.]: The gathering of the troops. Sec. 149-152 [Cr. Ed.]<br><br>*Sainyaniryanaparva*(n) [only in Cal. Ed. Chap: 63]: The enumeration of troops. Sec. 151-159 [Cal. Ed.] |
| Chapter 57 | *Bhiṣmamisecanaparva* [only in Cr. Ed.] : The installation of Bhīṣma as the Commander of the Kaurava forces. Sec. 153-156 [Cr. Ed.] |
| Chapter 58 | *Ulūkayānaparva* [*Ulūkadūtagamanaparva(n)*] in Cal. Ed. Chap. 64): Relating to the arrival of Ulūka as an envoy. Sec. 157-160 [Cr. Ed.]; 160-164 [Cal. Ed.] |
| Chapter 59 | *Rathatirathasaṅkhyānaparva(n)* [Chap. 65 in Cal. Ed.] : Relating to the computation of the '*Ratha's and 'Athiratha's.* Sec. 161-169 [Cr. Ed.]; 165-172 [Cal. Ed.] |
| Chapter 60 | *Ambopākhyānaparva(n)* [Chap. 66 in Cal. Ed.]: Relating to the history of *Ambā*. Sec. 170-197 [Cr. Ed.]; 173-196 [Cal. Ed.] |

Courtesy

Madhusraba Dasgupta
*Samsad Companion to the Mahābhārata*
(Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 1999)

# HINDUSTAN TIMES

## Kolkata Calendar



*Ek Kadam Age* will be staged at GD Birla Sabhagar on June 25

### READING SESSION

**GD Birla Sabhagar**
Professor P Lal reads Sanjaya's report to Dhritarastra of Arjuna's fierce vow to avenge the slaughter of his son Abhimanyu by killing Jayadratha, and Krishna severely rebuking Arjuna for taking such a rash decision, in the 333rd weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's complete *Mahabharata*, presented by Sanskriti Sagar on June 25 at 11 am.

ॐ The Mahābhārata

Appearing in single-volume format from WRITERS WORKSHOP
The Complete Mahābhārata transcreated by P. Lāl

Book 1 : The Ādi Parva (2005)
Book 2 : The Sabhā Parva (2005)
Book 3 : The Vana Parva (2005)
Book 4 : The Virāṭa Parva (2006)
Book 5 : The Udyoga Parva (2006)
Book 6 : The Bhīṣma Parva (2006)
Book 7 : The Droṇa Parva (2006)
Book 8 : The Karṇa Parva (2006)
Book 9 : The Śalya Parva (2006)
Book 10 : The Sauptika Parva (2006)
Book 11 : The Śtrī Parva (2006)
Book 12 : The Śānti Parva (2007)
Book 13 : The Anuśāsana Parva (2008)
Book 14 : The Aśvamedha Parva (2008)
Book 15 : The Āśramavāsika Parva (2008)
Book 16 : The Mausala Parva (2008)
Book 17 : The Mahāprasthāna Parva (2008)
Book 18 : The Svargārohaṇa Parva (2008)

*Appearing from WW in 2006*

Prefaces & Notes to Vyāsa's Ādi Parva
Prefaces and Notes to Vyāsa's Sabhā Parva
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śakuntalā Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yayāti Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Mandapāla Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Draupadī-Svayaṁvara Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Sāvitrī-Satyavān Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Nala-Damayantī Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śiśupāla-Vadha Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yakṣa-Yudhiṣṭhira Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Rāmāyaṇa Kathā

# The Mahābhārata of Vyasa

Transcreated from Sanskrit
by P. Lal

On the following pages are facsimile reproductions of pages from different Mahābhārata fascicules (#85-108) of the Udyoga Parva, showing the Sanskrit notes and extensive revisions and additions by P. Lal. These were prepared for the reading sessions of the transcreation, presented under the auspicious of the Sanskriti Sagar at the G. D. Birla Sabhagar in Kolkata. Started in October 1999, P. Lal has so far (August 2006) read 340 one-hour sessions, followed by question-and-answer periods of up to half an hour.

the filial relations of Kaurava and
Pāṇḍava will prosper.

9 If Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son, motivated
by pride and folly,
spurns the peace terms, send word
to all of us.

दर्पान्
मोहान्

10 Then wicked Duryodhana will have
to face — together
with his followers — the angered
Gāṇḍīva-wielder's wrath."

पृथिवीपति

11 Virāṭa, lord of the earth, honoured
Vārsneya Krishna and bid
him and his followers farewell
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

सत्कृत्य

12 After Krishna departed for Dvāraka,
Yudhiṣṭhira's followers
and king Virāṭa made preparations
for a great war.

चक्रु:
सांग्रामिकं

13 Virāṭa and his allies, along
with king Drupada,
informed other rulers of the
impending ~~approaching~~ battle.

14 Requested by the Kuru-lions, and the
rulers of Matsya
and Pāñcāla, kings gladly came with
huge armies.

15 When Dhṛtarāṣṭra heard that a
massive force was
gathering under the Pāṇḍavas, he
summoned friendly rulers.

महद् बलं

16 It seemed that the whole world
was crowded with

भूतानां प्राणिनः श्रेष्ठाः
प्राणिनां बुद्धिजीविनः।
बुद्धिमत्सु नराः श्रेष्ठा
नरेष्वपि द्विजातयः॥

25

द्विजेषु वैद्याः श्रेयांसो
वैद्येषु कृतबुद्धयः।
कृतबुद्धिषु कर्तारः
कर्तृषु ब्रह्मवादिनः॥

देवीं
सपर्वतवनामिमाम्
ज्ञावयोवृद्धं

:३

*1* Drupada said, "Animate life is
superior to inanimate;
intelligent animate life is superior
to unintelligent;
human intelligent animate life
superior to non-human;
and the twice-born human superior
to other humans.

*2* The Veda-knowers are superior
to the twice-born;
the self-perfected are superior
to the Veda-knowers;
the life-involved are superior
to the self-perfected;
the Brahman-knowers are superior
to the life-involved.

*3* You are the finest of those who
are self-perfected.

MAHABHARATA VOL 85 DECEMBER 1975



... sun or moon was devouring

दृढं सतां संगतं चापि नित्यं
ब्रूयाच्चार्थं ह्यर्थकृच्छ्रेषु वीरः।
महार्थवत् सत्पुरुषेण संगतं
तस्मात् सन्तं न जिघांसेत धीरः॥

(rhyme!)

aid

anquish !

lds !

lra.

r him ?

humans

ख्यं भवतु ते
त्र शक्रेण सह
नित्यदा

a."

Śakra-l

~~Immensely~~ Mahā- powerful Vṛtra heard this,

21 And *praṇāma*-ed all the ṛṣis,
and replied :
"O ~~most~~ mahā- fortunate beings,
O gandharvas,

महाभागा

22 I have listened carefully to what
you have said.
Listen now to me, stainless ones.
How can peace
exist between two equally strong gods,
me and Indra ?"

O/ अनघाः

संधि कथं वै भविता

Śakra-l

23 The ṛṣis replied :
"Brief friendship is possible,
whatever else follows,
Good men seeking friendship
should never be refused ;
indeed, should be welcomed.

24 Friendship with good men,
according to the wise,
is like riches in penury.
What wealth is greater
than friendship with the good ?
Never refuse the good.

25 Good men respect Indra, he is the
refuge of mahātmās.
He has dharma, he is truthful,
blameless, and just.

26 Let there be peace for ever between
you and Indra.
Put trust in him. Do not ever
think otherwise."

27 The radiantly-energetic being heard
the ṛṣis and said :
"Illustrious ones, it is required that
I should honour you.

28 If you promise to honour my terms,
O mighty gods,
I will promise to do what you
have asked of me.

29 Nothing dry,
Nothing wet,
Neither stone
Nor wood,
Neither distant weapon
Nor hand weapon,
Not during day
Nor in the night,

30 Can kill me, though Indra and all
the gods try,

MAHABHARATA VOL 86 JANUARY 1976

# ॐ The Mahābhārata



## *IN THIS FASCICULE*

Śalya tells Yudhiṣṭhira the story of how the human Nahuṣa was made rājā of the gods; he began, however, lusting for the wife of Indra, whom he supplanted *[Sections 11-13]*. Indra hid in the stalk of a lotus, and was cleverly persuaded to reassert his authority *[14-16]*. He tricked Nahuṣa into

ulting
*[17]*.
into
own
llows
bring
the
the
ada's
*-19]*.

VṚTRA

Śānti Parva: (180:57)
Vṛtra enters heaven after his death.

NAMES OF VṚTRA

Asuraśreṣṭha
Asurendra
Daityapati
Daityendra
Dānavendra
Surāri
Viśvātmā

2 NOVEMBER 2003

Professor P. Lal reads of how the human Nahusha became the raja of the gods and how he lusted for the wife of Indra, whom he had supplanted, in the 202nd weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata, at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 2 November 2003 at 11 a.m.

*The Senodyoga-parva in the Udyoga parva*

## SECTION 11

1 All the chief gods and ṛṣis (continued Śalya) said: "Let handsome Nahuṣa be Śrīmān, the rājā ~~ruler~~ of the gods.

तेजस्वी च यशस्वी च धार्मिकश्च

2 He is illustrious and energetic, a man of dharma." They approached him, saying, "O earth-Ruler, be our rājā." पार्थिव

3 Nahuṣa wanted their welfare; so, O rājā, he replied to the gods and ṛṣis, ~~and the~~ accompanying pitṛs:

4 "I am weak. I have no shakti to protect you. A rājā should be powerful, as Śakra-Indra was powerful."

दुर्बलोऽहं न मे शक्तिर्भवतां परिपालने

MAHABHARATA VOL 86 JANUARY 1976

न तस्य बीजं रोहति रोहकाले* *Transcreation*
न तस्य वर्षं वर्षति वर्षकाले।
भीतं प्रपन्नं प्रददाति शत्रवे
न स त्रातारं लभते त्राणमिच्छन्॥

प्रमीयते चास्य प्रजा ह्यकाले# महाद्युते
सदा विवासं पितरोऽस्य कुर्वते।
भीतं प्रपन्नं प्रददाति शत्रवे
सेन्द्रा देवाः प्रहरन्त्यस्य वज्रं॥

Giant one,

lovely-thighed,
ह्या वरवर्णिनी

ऋषसत्तम
नाहमिच्छामि
नहुषं पतिं
शरणागतास्मि
ते

I do not want
Nahusa for husband, I seek your
protection. Save me !"

16 Bṛhaspati said : "Blameless and truth-
speaking lady of dharma,
I gave you my word ; I will
not desert you.

सत्यशीलां
धर्मज्ञां

17 I am a Brahmin, I have heard
of dharma, I know
about dharma and truth, I have
no desire to do wrong.

18 I will not do it ! Excellent gods,
you may go.
Remember in this connection the
old song of Brahmā :

सुरोत्तमा

पुरा गीतं ब्रह्मणा

19 'The person who betrays
a refugee, indeed
finds himself betrayed
when he is in need.
At sowing time for him
there is no seed,
No rain will fructify
this man's misdeed.

*

20 The gods do not honour
the man who betrays
a terror-stricken friend
to shelterless days.
He is turned from heaven
for his evil ways,
His oblations are refused
by the gods always.

स्वर्गाल्लोकाद् भ्रश्यति नष्टचेष्टः

21 The thunderbolt of Indra
destroys such a man
who betrays a shelter-seeker
to an enemy's plan.
His children live only
the briefest span,
His ancestors quarrel,
whenever they can.'

#

22 Because I know this to be so,
I will not
turn over Śacī, the beloved
queen of Indra.

Śakra

अस्या हितं भवेद् यच्च मम चापि हितं भवेद्



23 What is good for her will be good
for me also. excellent
Act for her good, O gods I will
not deliver Śacī."

24 The gods and gandharvas said
to their guru :
"O Bṛhaspati, decide on the best
course to follow." सुनीतं

25 Bṛhaspati said : "Get Nahuṣa to
give some time काल
to the auspicious devī. This will help
her — and us.

बहुविघ्नः सुराः

26 ~~Time~~ Kāla is very complex, O gods.
Kāla ~~Time~~ breeds ~~time~~ Kāla. deed delivers from.
कालः कालः
Nahuṣa has a boon that has
gone to his head." कालं नयिष्यति

27 These words of Bṛhaspati pleased
the gods; they said :
"Excellent words, O Brahmin, meant
for the gods' welfare.

28 Let this be so, twice-born one.
Let us secure
the devī's agreement." Agni and
the other gods
went to Śacī Indrāṇī and spoke these
gentle words :

29 "Lady of truth, you who ~~hold~~ uphold
the moving and
unmoving worlds' life, sole wife, एकपत्नी सत्या
go to Nahuṣa.

30 Mischief-bent Nahuṣa is filled
with kāma for you —
his end is near, and you, O devī,
will rule with Indra."

पापकृत: Śakra-

31 Assuring herself on this matter,
the modest wife
of Indra went to fearful Nahuṣa
to attain her end.

सव्रीडा

32 The ill-ātmaned Nahuṣa saw
her beauty and
her youth, and revelled in his
kāma-intoxication.

दुष्टात्मा

कामोपहतचेतन:

त्रयाणामपि लोकानाम्

अहमिन्द्र:

## SECTION 13

1 Nahuṣa, rājā of the gods,
saw her approach
and said, "Sweet-smiling lady,
I am ~~great~~ Indra ;

शुचिस्मिते

three-worlds-ruling

2 lovely-thighed, ~~Slim-waisted~~, shining-skinned lady,
have me as husband."
The virtuous lady, hearing these
words of Nahuṣa,

वरारोहे वरवर्णिनि भजस्व मां पतित्वे

पतिव्रता

3 Trembled like a plantain tree
in a thunderstorm.
She bowed before Brahmā and
performed *añjali*,

4 And said to the fearful-looking
rājā ~~ruler~~ of the gods : —
"O chief of the gods, I need time
to make up my mind.

घोरदर्शनम्

सुरेश्वर

कालमिच्छाम्यहं

DEVI BHĀGAVATA (6th Skandha) has a different explanation:

1. EARTH receives the guilt of Brahmin-murder with the boon that its depressions will be filled – salt beds.
2. WATER with the boon that it will swell when joined – foam + bubbles.
3. TREE with the boon that it will not die even if sliced – the sap of the tree.
4. WOMEN with the boon that orgasm will be continuous ~~after~~ during their post-menstrual fertile period.

TAITTIRYA SAMHITĀ (2.5-1.2-5)

Earth takes 1/3 of guilt – if she will not suffer from digging – she recovers after a year from ploughing.
Trees should not suffer from pruning – pruning brings out new shoots.
Women will accept guilt if they can bear children after menstruation.

The link is that all expiate the guilt by sublimating it –
All three are cut, just as Viśvarūpa was cut by Indra's thunderbolt.

✱ क्षमा यशस्विनी

निकेतन

देवदेव

वाक्यविशारदाः

प्रभुः सुरगणेश्वर

पूर्वजो जगतः

...wa-
...ahmin-murder.

13 O show us the way to redeem ourselves,
O lord of the gods ~~ourselves~~ !" Viṣṇu
heard the gods supplicate him
in this manner

14 And said : "Let Indra propitiate me,
I will cleanse
his thunderbolt. Let the Pāka-slayer
sacrifice a horse,

15 And be restored to his pre-eminence
as lord of the gods.
Wicked Let him be fearless. Nahuṣa's own ~~deeds~~ karma
will destroy Nahuṣa. स्वकर्माभिश्च

16 As for you, O gods, cultivate नहुषो नाशं
the art of patience."
Heeding ~~[illegible]~~ these true, auspicious and
nectar-sweet words of Viṣṇu, शुभां सत्यां अमृतोपमां

17 The gods, their teachers, and the
mahā-ṛṣis hurried
Śakra- to the spot where Indra lay
paralysed by fear.

Mahendra- 18 To free mahātmā Indra, they performed
an *aśvamedha* sacrifice
that had the power of absolving
a Brahmin-murderer.

19 And so the crime of Brahmin-murder
was distributed, ~~was divided~~, O Yudhiṣṭhira,
among trees, rivers, mountains, earth
and women.
विभज्य

20 In this way it freed the chief
of the gods ; Vāsava-
crime- Indra was ~~guilt~~-cleansed, and
made whole again.

See Vol. 85 p. 47

विभज्य ब्रह्महत्यां तु वृक्षेषु च नदीषु च
पर्वतेषु पृथिव्यां च स्त्रीषु

21 Remember your promise and abide
by dharma :
return what should be returned while
there is time."

## SECTION 21

1 Illustrious and wise Bhīṣma heard
these words, offered pūjā
to their speaker, and replied
in this manner :

2 "It is good news that Krishna and
the Pāṇḍavas are well,
that they have allies, that they
are guided by dharma.

3 It is good that our Pāṇḍava cousins
desire peace,
that they do not harbour belligerence
for their relatives.

4 Your words have the ring of truth ;
they are hard
I think this is so because you
are a Brahmin.

6 Pṛthā's son, Diadem-wearing Arjuna,
is expert in
the use of weapons. Who can stand
against Arjuna ?

5 Pāṇḍu's sons have passed through
intense hardships
in the forest, and they deserve
their paternal share.

7 Even thunder-wielding Indra cannot
defeat Arjuna ;
how can others ? I think he can conquer
all the three worlds."

8 Karṇa passionately and insultingly
interrupted Bhisma ;
Karṇa glanced at Duryodhana,
and said :

9 "Brahmin, what you say is nothing
new : it is
common knowledge. Why do you have
to repeat it again and again?

10 Long ago, Śakuni, playing for
Duryodhana, defeated Pāṇḍu's son
Yudhiṣṭhira at dice ; so Yudhiṣṭhira
went into forest-exile.

11 Forgetting his pledge, foolish Yudhiṣṭhira,
bolstered by the
armies of Matsya and Pāñcāla, now wants
his paternal share.

12 O Intelligent one, Duryodhana will not
surrender one foot
of ground out of fear ; for dharma
he may give the whole earth.

13 If they want their ancestral
kingdom returned to them,
let them continue forest-exile till
the agreed period.

14 After which let them come and unafraid
ask for Duryodhana's
protection. Let them avoid any course
involving adharma.

## SECTION 27

Sañjaya replied : "

Now I see clearly
you are a man of dharma.
Great deeds are possible
though life is transient.
Don't ruin your fame.

2 Assume they refuse
to return the kingdom ;
I think it is better
to live as a beggar
in Andhaka and Vṛṣṇi,
than wage war.

3 Man's life is brief
and filled with suffering ;
it is always changing.
Honour is greater.
That is why, O Pāṇḍava,
one should avoid ill deeds.

4 The cravings of kāma
are obstacles to dharma.
O Indra-of-men,
overcoming kāma,
the wise achieve
inestimable fame.

5 The craving for wealth
is an obstacle to dharma.
He is the wise man
who chooses dharma.
The seeker for kāma
is corrupted by kāma.

*6* With dharma to guide him
a man finds fame,
and shines like the sun.
The man without dharma
may win the whole world
but is really ruined.

*7* You know the Vedas,
you practise brahmacarya,
you give gifts to Brahmins,
you have dedicated
many years of your life
to the search for happiness.

*8* The person who chases
pleasure exclusively
without doing yoga,
will never find happiness ;
his wealth will desert him,
kāma will grip him.

*9* The fool who abandons
brahmacarya and dharma,
and follows adharma,
will suffer torments
in the other world
after leaving his body.

*10* Neither karma that's good
nor karma that's bad
is effaced after death.
It reaches ahead,
whether good or bad,
and the doer follows.

*11* Your karma is famous,
like wholesome and tasty

7 When you leave us, Sañjaya,
attend on the Brahmins
of purest devotion,
of the finest families,
Brahmins well-versed
in all the known dharmas ;

8 Go also to Brahmins
devoted to study, स्वाध्यायितो
who subsist on alms,
and live in the forest.
Present my regards,
specially to elders.

9 Seek, tāta, dear one,
the purohita of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and all his ācāryas
and ṛtviks, and give them
my regards, O Sūta,
and concern for their health.

10 With peaceful deportment
offer my *añjali*
and humble namaskāra.
To the low-born, if old
or cultured or valiant,
who keep us in mind,

11 And steadily follow यथाशक्ति धर्ममात्रां
the pattern of dharma, चरन्त:
present my regards.
Inquire of their health,
and say we are well.
In addition, tāta, dear one,

12 Go also to those
in trade and commerce
and state administration,

gathering, completion, havoc, slaughter



and to those engaged
in the tilling of soil,
~~and present my regards.~~ and enquire of their health.

तेषां सर्वेषां कुशलं स्म पृच्छेः

13 Ācārya Droṇa
is a brahmacāri ~~knowing~~ who knows
the fourfold morality —
mantra, upacāra, → reverence, politeness (64 upacāras are named in the Tantra-sāra)
prayoga, saṃhāra. application; implementation
He is absolute expert
in the science of weapons.
He looks on us kindly.
Give him our regards.

अभिवाद्यस्त्वयासौ

14 Aśvatthāman also
has steadfastly practised
the fourfold morality.
He is master of weapons,
strong as a gandharva.
~~Give him our regards.~~ Enquire of his health.

15 Proceed to the ~~house~~ mahā-chariot-hero
Śāradvata-~~of powerful~~ Kṛpa,
wise in the ātman.
Repeatedly touch
his feet ~~with respect~~ Sañjaya,
on the Pāṇḍavas' behalf.

आत्मविदां
पादौ पाणिना स्पृशेः

16 Touch also the feet
of Bhīṣma, the ~~chief~~ finest
~~of the Kurus,~~ Kauravas, heroic
and humble and ~~learned,~~ patient,
devoted and noble,
~~moral and wise, learned~~ steeped in śruti-wisdom

श्रुतिसत्त्वे

17 The elderly rājā
who has inseeing eyes,
the king of the ~~Kurus,~~ Kauravas,

प्रज्ञाचक्षुषं

scented
~~perfumed~~ and ornamented,
who are happy and fearless,
~~and soft in their speech.~~
sweet-looking and sweet-speaking.

40 The servants and maids,
and the lame and the hunchbacked
looked after by them —
give them my greetings,
enquire of their health,
and ask them ~~for~~ from me :

अलंकृता वस्त्रवत्य सुगन्धा
अवीभत्सा सुखिता भोगवत्य: ।
लघु यासां दर्शनं वाक् च लघ्वी
वेशास्त्रिय: कुशलं तात पृच्छे ॥

nsion ?
arfs
»o
ı ?'

लघु = short, brief,
lovely, sweet,
frivolous,
trivial, low,
mean.

member
th.

caused → परलोकेषु पापम्

Yudhiṣṭhira will come
and provide you with comfort.'

44 Enquire of Duryodhana
if the pensions I granted
to Brahmins are honoured.
For I am determined
to fulfil their desires
and give them rewards.

45 Remember me also
to the weak, ~~and~~ the helpless, and foolish,
with none to protect them,
struggling for livelihood,
and do not forget, tāta, dear one,
the unlettered and ignorant.

46 And those who have come
in the hope of finding
refuge with Duryodhana
from all parts of the earth —
remember, Sūta's son,
to go to them also.

47 The ambassadors who come
to the court of the ~~king~~ rājā
of Hastināpura
from different countries —
greet them, and tell them, Sūta,
Yudhiṣṭhira is well.

48 ~~Nothing~~ No warrior excels
the heroes who now
have joined Duryodhana.
But dharma's eternal,
and dharma's my strength mahā-
for destroying my enemies.

49 ~~Go go to~~ To Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, go,
and tell him, Sañjaya :
'The desire tormenting
your heart — to be king
without rival — is futile.

50 ~~We will do nothing~~ It is all so pointless.
~~to cause you displeasure.~~ Nothing we do pleases you.
But the choice is clear :

धर्मस्तु नित्यो मम धर्म एव
महाबलः शत्रुनिबर्हणाय

ददस्व वा शक्रपुरी ममैव युध्यस्व वा भारतमुख्य वीर



Śakrapuri-
Return Indraprastha
to me, O brave Bharata,
or let there be war.'

## SECTION 31

1 Yudhiṣṭhira added, "Sañjaya,
the Creator controls
good and bad, young and old,
weak and strong.

2 The Lord of all makes a paṇḍit
of a child,
and a fool of a paṇḍit, according to
the scheme of things.

सर्वमीशानः

3 Having openly discussed with us
to arrive ~~to find the facts,~~ at the facts,
go and tell curious Dhṛtarāṣṭra
how things are.

4 Gāvalgana- Sañjaya, to
Go ~~to the Kauravas, and greet~~
... powerful Dhṛtarāṣṭra ... Kaurava,

उत सन्तमसन्तं वा
बालं वृद्धं च सञ्जय ।
उताबलं बलीयांसं
धाता प्रकुरुते वशे ॥

jā!
ily
om

प्रसाद

Re-possess them, do not ignore
and ruin them.'

One man, O Sañjaya, alone will find ~~Kaurav this~~
this kingdom burdensome.

fool

So tell him for us : 'Let us unite,
or foes will kill us.'

8 On my behalf, bow your head
before the mighty
grandfather Bhīṣma, son of Śāntanu
of the Bharatas.

9 After honouring him, tell him :
'Your intervention
saved the race of Śāntanu from
impending extinction.

10 You intervened once. Intervene
now, O grandfather,
and make your grandsons live
in peace together.'

11 Go also to Vidura, adviser of
the Kurus, praise him :
'You who abhor war, you who wish
Yudhiṣṭhira's welfare !'

12 Go to the haughty Duryodhana
when he is
sitting among the Kurus, entreat him
again and again :

13 'The outrage against innocent Draupadi
dragged in the sabhā —
we quietly suffered that to prevent
a massacre of Kurus.

14 The Kauravas know how many similar
insults the Pāṇḍavas
endured earlier and later, though they
could have retaliated.

15 Cousin, you forced us into exile to
wearing deer-skin.

7 DECEMBER 2003

Professor P. Lal reads of Dhritarastra's summoning of his "half-brother" Vidura, and Vidura's bitter indictment of Dhritarastra's blind fondness for his son Duryodhana, in the 207th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka transcreation of the complete Mahabharata of Vyasa at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 7 December 2003 at 11 a.m.

2 Acting on Dhṛtarāṣṭra's ~~request,~~ order,
the attendant said
Kṣattā- to Vidura: "~~Learned lord,~~ O mahā-wise one, the mahārāja
has summoned you."

क्षत्रि (son of a female slave)

3 Vidura hurried to the palace.
He approached
the gate-keeper and said: "Announce
me to Dhṛtarāṣṭra."

4 The gate-keeper said: "O Indra
among ~~kings,~~ rājās, Vidura desires
~~wishes to touch~~ a darshan of your feet. Instruct
me, your majesty."

द्रष्टुमिच्छति ते पादौ

5 "Let ~~the very~~ mahā-wise far-seeing Vidura
be allowed in,"

दीर्घदर्शिनम

ordered Dhṛtarāṣṭra. "I am always
ready ~~to receive him.~~ for his darshan."

6 "~~Sir,~~ Kṣattā-Vidura, you may enter the wise mahārāja's
inner apartment,"

धीमत:

said the gate-keeper. "The rājā says
~~you are~~ your darshan is always welcome."

7 Vidura entered Dhṛtarāṣṭra's palace
and did *añjali*

चिन्तयानं

before the lord of men who was
lost in thought. नराधिपम्

"O mahā-wise monarch!

8 Greatly wise sire, I am Vidura,
present come here because
you summoned me. Command me
to serve you."

9 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said : "Sañjaya was here, Wise,
Vidura. He left after
criticising me. Yudhiṣṭhira's terms will Ajātaśatru-
be placed in the sabhā. गर्हयित्वा

10 I was not told what the terms न विज्ञातं वचो मया
of Yudhiṣṭhira were,
for which reason I am restless
and deeply worried.

11 Tell me what is good for a man
whose body burns
and who cannot sleep. You know Tāta Vidura,
you know dharma-and-*artha*.

12 ~~Since~~ After Sañjaya returned
with the Pāṇḍavas' terms,
my peace is disturbed ;
all my senses appear → सर्वेन्द्रियाणि
to be in confusion अप्रकृतिं
about his proposals."

13 Vidura replied : "Sleeplessness afflicts
one who is threatened
by a stronger rival, one who's weak,
whose efforts have failed,
~~whose~~ who has lost his wealth ~~has gone~~, who ~~has~~ is kāma-stricken,
or who's a thief. नराधिप

14 Lord of men, I hope none of these
is the cause of your sleeplessness,

अभियुक्तं बलवता दुर्बलं हीनसाधनम् ।
हृतस्वं कामिनं चोरमाविशन्ति प्रजागराः ॥

of punishment, honours shallowness, and
seeks help from misers.

45 The pandit is he who, though he
acquire great riches,
learning and power, behaves without
any show of pride.

46 Who is more callous than the man
with great wealth
who eats and dresses well without
sharing his fortune?

47 One man does the misdeed—
hundreds enjoy
its fruits. While others enjoy,
he pays the price.

48 When an archer shoots an arrow,
he kills one, or misses.
Royal cleverness misapplied ruins both
king and subjects.

49 Use *one* (the mind) to find *two*
(right and wrong);
control *three* (friend, enemy, and
neutral) with help
from *four* (placation, gift, subterfuge,
and punishment);
discipline the *five* senses, and
know the *six*
(treaty and war, hunger and thirst,
aging and death);
stay away from the *seven* (women,
gambling, hunting,
liquor, cruel speech, injustice, ill-won
wealth), and prosper.

50 Poison kills one, most weapons
kill one, but
counsellors quarrelling ruin ~~king~~ rājā
and subjects.

51 Alone do not eat delicious food,
alone do not
work for high profit, alone do not
go on journeys,
alone do not wake when others
are asleep.

सत्यं स्वर्गस्य सोपानं एकमेवाद्वितीयं तद्

52 The only way to heaven is
truth, it is the only
boat across the ocean. Rājā,
this you do not know.

53 There is only one defect in persons
who ~~forgive~~ are patient —
patient people ~~persons who forgive~~ are ~~considered~~ thought
~~as weaklings~~ to be incompetent.

क्षमावतां अशक्त

54 Do not attach importance to this.
Patience ~~Forgiveness~~ is
tremendous. It ornaments the weak
and the strong.

क्षमा गुणो हि अशक्तानां शक्तानां भूषणं क्षमा

55 Patience ~~Forgiveness~~ rules the world. What is there
beyond ~~forgiveness?~~ patience?
How can a scoundrel harm a man who
wields ~~has~~ the sword of peace?

ksamā

शान्तिखड्गः

56 Fire falling on grassless soil
extinguishes itself.
The impatient ~~The unforgiving~~ person works out
his own ruin.

57 There is only one supreme refuge — dharma.
Only one peace — patience.

एकया द्वे विनिश्चित्य त्रींश्चतुर्भिर्वशे कुरु ।
पञ्च जित्वा विदित्वा षट् सप्त हित्वा सुखी भव ॥

सत्यं दानं अनालस्य अनसूया क्षमा धृतिः



87 These six gunas should never be discarded
by anyone:
generosity, truth, activity, absence of envy,
forbearance, steadiness.

92 These six are lost even with
the smallest neglect, O rājā:
cows, job, harvest, wife, knowledge,
friendship with the low-minded.

विनश्यन्ति मुहूर्तम् (24 minutes)

93 These six forget the good that
is done to them:
a clever pupil, his ācārya; married sons, their mothers;

वृषल-संगति

वृषल also means Śudra

शिक्षिता: शिष्या:

94 Men with kāma gratified, their women;
those who have
found success, their helpers; river-crossers, their boatmen;
healed patients, their doctors.

95 O rājā, these six
comprise human happiness:
non-disease, and non-debt,
non-exile, good friends,
a dependable job,
a life free from fear.

षड् जीवलोकस्य सुखानि

96 These six are doomed to suffer:
the envious, contemptuous,
discontented, angry, suspicious, and
livers-off-others.

घृणी also means compassionate tender

88 These six are sure to be happy, O rājā:
the prosperous, the healthy,
the man with a soft-speaking wife,
an obedient son,
the man with profitable knowledge, the man who has friends.

ईर्ष्यी घृणी नसंतुष्ट क्रोधनो नित्यशङ्कितः
परभाग्योपजीवी च षडेते नित्यदुःखिताः ॥

काम क्रोध लोभ मोह मद मात्सर्य



89 How can grief touch the sense-disciplined man who
slays the six foes —
anger, kāma, greed, bewilderment,
pride, and jealousy?

90 Next — six thrive on six counterparts,
not on a seventh : → सप्तमो न उपलभ्यते
pilferers on the absent-minded, doctors
on the diseased,

91 Prostitutes on the kāma-stricken,
priests on sponsors
of yajñas, kings on quarrellers,
wise men on the ignorant. → मूर्खेषु पण्डिताः

97 A rājā should avoid the seven
weaknesses that
lead to the ruin of even the
greatest monarchs —

98 Women, gambling, hunting, drinking,
foul speaking —
these five — and unjust punishment,
and abuse of power.

99 The following eight are the cause of
the ruin of men :
hatred of Brahmins, and struggle
against Brahmins,

100 Dispossessing Brahmins, and murder
of Brahmins,
delight in mocking Brahmins, disapproving
praising them,

101 Not remembering them on festivals,
criticising them
when they ask help. Wise men
should overcome these.

p.39a

38 Parjanya the rain-god sustains cattle,
ministers sustain a rājā,
a wife's friend is her husband,
a Brahmin's friend the Vedas.

39 Truth protects dharma,
yoga protects knowledge,
cleanliness protects beauty,
character protects a family.

सत्येन रक्ष्यते धर्मो ।विद्या योगेन रक्ष्यते।
मृजया रक्ष्यते रूपं कुलं वृत्तेन रक्ष्यते॥

40 Grain is protected by sifting,
horses by exercises,
cows by constant care,
women by unattractive dresses.

।स्त्रियो रक्ष्या: कुचैलत:

कुचेल = dirty, tattered, soiled dress

p. 39 b

41 In my opinion, character matters,
not noble birth,
even men of low birth show
exemplary character.

42 Anyone who envies others' wealth,
beauty, success, valour, noble birth,
luck, happiness, and renown suffers
from an incurable disease.

य ईर्षुः परवित्तेषु रूपे वीर्ये कुलान्वये ।

सुखसौभाग्यसत्कारे तस्य व्याधिरनन्तकः

Add: Ślokas 38-42



43 Let him not touch liquor who fears
acting improperly,
or forgetting to act properly, or prematurely
discloses ~~disclosing~~ his plans.

44 Pride in learning, pride in wealth,
pride in power
and noble birth — good men should
conquer these weaknesses.

45 Dishonest men sometimes start thinking
themselves honest if
they do even the smallest work
for honest men.

46 Holy men give refuge to themselves
and other holy men ;
the unholy shelter the unholy and
never the holy.

सन्त:

The well dressed speaker triumphs in
... r sweets ;
... an of character
... ng.

जिता सभा वस्त्रवता मिष्टाशा गोमता
अध्वा जितो यानवता जिता।
सर्वं शीलवता जितम् ॥

शीलवतां
good conduct, character, moral

48 Character matters most in man.
Without character,
what is life, what is wealth,
what are friends ?

49 Flesh-foods are staple for the rich ;
milk-foods are
staple for the middle-class ; oily foods
for the poor.

तैलोत्तरं (Gita)
लवणोत्तरं (Crit. Ed.)

50 The tastiest food is enjoyed by the
by the poor, for

शीलं प्रधानं पुरुषे तद् यस्येह प्रणश्यति ।
न तस्य जीवितेनार्थो न धनेन न बन्धुभिः ॥

hunger gives relish. And hunger is
rare among the rich.

51 The rich in this world hardly digest
what they eat,
while the poor can digest even
chunks of wood.

52 The poor fear most the loss
of a job ;
the middle-class fears death, the rich
fear insult.

53 Wealth-intoxicated rascals are worse
than wine-intoxicated ones,
for they never become sane till all
their wealth vanishes.

54 Like the planets influencing the
stars, the senses
blindly and adversely influence
the material world.

55 The sorrows of the man who is
trapped by his senses
to unthinking action increase like
the waxing moon.

56 Strength is sapped from the man
who tries to control
advisers without controlling himself, and foes
without controlling advisers.

57 This is certain : the five senses
are the chief foes.
Control them, and advisers and enemies
get naturally controlled.

58 He prospers who controls his senses,
who wields justice

*The P. Lāl Transcreation*

(*) रथः शरीरं पुरुषस्य राजन्नात्मा नियन्तेन्द्रियाण्यस्य चाश्वाः।
तैरप्रमत्तः कुशली सदश्वैर्दान्तैः सुखं याति रथीव धीरः॥ jā, (*)

the senses the horses.
If the horses are tamed
with care and patience,
one travels in peace.

60 The untamed senses lead only
to confusion,
and untamed horses lead weak drivers
to disaster.

61 Deluded by his senses, a fool
mistakes sorrow for joy; for
he cannot tell worthless from useful,
nor useful from worthless.

62 The spurner of dharma-and-*artha*, rom'
who lives by his senses,
will soon lose fame and energy,
wealth and wife. → श्रीप्राणधनदारा

63 The master of riches who is slave
of his senses
loses his riches by not controlling
his senses.

64 Know yourself by your self,
know the ātman
by the ātman. Control mind, intellect, → मन बुद्धि इन्द्रिय
and senses.
You are your own friend, you are
your own enemy.
Ātman's friend is ātman, ātman's foe
is ātman.

आत्मैव हि आत्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः

*65* The man who controls the ātman
has ātman as friend,
the man who does not control it
has it as foe.

*66* A large fish breaks out of a
flimsy net, O rājā,
So kāma and anger break through
imperfect ~~wisdom~~ self-knowledge.

क्षुद्रजालेन

*67* The man who seeks success
by cherishing
dharma-and-*artha* is ~~soon~~ rewarded
~~and lives happily.~~ with a happy life.

*68* The man who tries to subdue
other enemies
before subduing ~~the~~ his mind-based five foes,
is soon crushed.

*69* There are many cases of mahātmā rājās
who ~~desired land~~ lusted for kingdoms
and obtained ruin because they failed
to control their senses.

*70* The wicked and innocent,
if found ~~if always~~ together,
get equally punished,
like damp sticks burning
along with dry faggots.
Shun friendship with wickedness.

पापैः सह सान्धिं न कुर्यात्

*71* ~~The~~ Your five greedy foes have five
different objects.
Sorrow awaits the ~~man~~ fool who cannot
control them.

*72* These will not be found in
the ill-ātmaned man:

यज्ञः दानं
अध्ययनं तपः

55 The virtues of ~~holiness~~ of the saintly —
yajña and charity,
tapasyā and study.
The virtues of ~~honesty~~ the honest —
self-control and truth,
simplicity and ~~kindness~~ non-injury.

दमः सत्यं आर्जवं अनृशंस्यं

56 Eight roads lead to dharma: yajña,
study, charity,
tapasyā, truth, ~~forgiveness~~ patience, mercy,
and absence of greed.

इज्य अध्ययन दान
तपः सत्यं क्षमा
घृणा अलोभ

57 The first four may be ~~accompanied~~ found in
proud and ~~[illegible]~~ selfish ~~motives~~ men,
but the remaining four are found only
~~in unselfish men~~ among mahātmas.

न सा सभा यत्र न सन्ति वृद्धा
न ते वृद्धा ये न वदन्ति धर्मम् ॥
नासौ धर्मो यत्र न सत्यमस्ति
न तत् सत्यं
यच्छलेनाभ्युपेतम् ॥

rma.
uth.
truth,
knowledge,
wealth

60 The ill man who does ill deeds
gets ill fruits ;
the good man who does good deeds
finds goodness.

पुण्यं कुर्वन्
पुण्यकीर्तिः

61 That is why a man should abstain
from ill deeds.
Repeated indulgence in ill deeds
destroys wisdom.

नाशयति प्रज्ञां

सत्यं रूपं श्रुतं विद्या कौल्यं शीलं बलं धनम् ।
शौर्यं च चित्रभाष्यं च दशेमे स्वर्गयोनयः ॥

62 The man with lost wisdom always
does ill deeds.
Repeated indulgence in good deeds
enhances wisdom.

63 A man with enhanced wisdom does
further good deeds.
His good deeds bring him fame and
a holy refuge.
That is why a man should do
good deeds.

पुण्यकीर्तिः
पुण्यं स्थानं
गच्छति

64 The envious, aggressive, cruel,
the inimical, and
the deceitful soon find themselves
in trouble.

असूयको दन्दशूको
निष्ठुरो वैरकृच्छठः

65 The unenvious and wise man,
who always does good,
never faces difficulties ; indeed,
he shines everywhere.

सर्वत्र च विरोचते

66 The man who gathers wisdom from
the wise, is wise ;
his wisdom makes him succeed in
dharma-and-*artha*.

67 Act so in the day that you will
have peace at night ;
strive in eight months for peace
in the rainy four.

68 Act so in your youth that happiness
attends old age ;
live so this life that happiness
attends after death.

दिवसेनैव तत् कुर्याद् येन रात्रौ सुखं वसेत् ।
अष्टमासेन तत् कुर्याद् येन वर्षाः सुखं वसेत् ॥

MAHABHARATA VOL 89 APRIL 1976

# ॐ The Mahābhārata



*IN THIS FASCICULE*

Continuing his advice to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Vidura narrates the story of the Sādhyas and Atri's son *[Section 36]*, lists the various kinds of human natures *[37]*, describes human weaknesses and strengths *[38]*, and suggests to Dhṛtarāṣṭra that he behave impartially in the dispute between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas *[39]*. Dhṛtarāṣṭra continues to vacillate *[40]*.

Sādhyas are different from the Siddhas; ←
sādhyas are Means of Realisation and of Perfection; siddhas are the Perfected + Realised.
AGNI PURĀṆA (Gaṇabheda Adhyāya) says there are 12 Sādhyas:
Manas (mind), Manta (thought), Prāṇa (life-breath), Nara (man), Apāna (digestive breath), Vīryavān (brave), Vibhu (powerful), Haya (horse), Naya (prudent), Haṁsa (swan), Nārāyaṇa (refuge of man), Prabhu (lord)

ॐ

# The Mahābhārata

*The Prajāgara-parva in the Udyoga Parva*

## SECTION 36

1 In this connection (Vidura continued)
one hears the old ancient history
story of the conversation between the Sādhyas
and Atri's son.

इतिहासं पुरातनं

2 That strict-vowed mahā-ṛṣi happened maha-wise
to be wandering
as a *hamsa*-mendicant ; the Sādhya-gods
said to him :

हंसरूपेण

Paramahamsa upanisad

3 "We are known as the Sādhyas.
You look wise, and acquainted
You are unknown to us.
with scriptures ; instruct us
in learning that's liberal
in words full of wisdom."

śruti

बुद्धिमान

काव्यं वाचं

4 Atreya Atri's son replied : "Immortal ones!
'Restraint and tranquillity,

अमरा

how can a friend show sincerity or insincerity
unless approached ?

44 Despair ruins beauty.
Despair ruins prowess.
Despair ruins discrimination.
Despair brings disease.

संताप

45 Despair leads to no positive result,
despair consumes
the health, and delights one's foes.
Do not despair.

शोक

46 Men die and are re-born,
men wither and prosper,
men help and are helped,
men mourn and are mourned —
again and again,
again and again.

47 Sorrow and joy ;
adversity, success ;
losing and gaining,
death and rebirth —
this is life. So the wise
neither grieve nor are glad.

48 The senses are fickle,
they shift and change.
Like water that trickles
through holes in a pot,
intelligence escapes
through the ~~dominant~~ defective senses.

49 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said : "Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
like a raging fire,
will destroy my wicked sons, because
I betrayed him.

50 ~~49~~ Despair everywhere! I see nothing
but despair!
mahā- O learned one, ~~put~~ pull me out of
my despair."

महामते O blameless one! अनघ

~~50~~ 51 I see no way (replied Vidura)
but knowledge, tapasyā,
control of the senses, and renunciation
of avarice.

~~51~~ 52 Knowledge removes fear, and tapasyā
mahā- brings attainment,
serving gurus provides ... htenment, yoga

संतापाद् भ्रश्यते रूपं
संतापाद् भ्रश्यते बलम् ।
संतापाद् भ्रश्यते ज्ञानं
संतापाद् व्याधिमृच्छति ॥

ıokṣa,

: fetters

er a war

hieved, comes
ry. → सुखमेधते

पुनर्नरो म्रियते जायते च
पुनर्नरो हीयते वर्धते च ।
पुनर्नरो याचति याच्यते च
पुनर्नरः शोचति शोच्यते च ॥

ives
ıg
iā,
s.
ves

सुखं च दुःखं च भवाभवौ च
लाभालाभौ मरणं जीवितं च ।
पर्यायशः सर्वमेते स्पृशन्ति
तस्माद् धीरो न च हृष्येन्न शोचेत् ॥

प्रशमम्

the man who is boastful
of the good he has done,
the man who attempts
to pass lies for truth, → असतः सत्त्वमुपानयीत
Yama's servants, with nooses,
drag such to hell. → नयन्ति निरयं

7 It is dharma to do to others
what others do
to you. ~~Deceive the deceitful.~~ Trick the trickster. Be honest
with the honest. ⊛

8 Old age destroys beauty,
waiting destroys hope,
dharma destroys worldliness,
death destroys life,
kāma destroys shame,
nobility of behaviour
destroys bad companions,
anger destroys success,
pride destroys everything. ⊛⊛

9 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked : "The Vedas say
man's life is
a hundred years. Why do not all men
live that long ?"

10 They are proud (Vidura replied),
garrulous, indisciplined; O lord of men,
they over-eat, they are passionate,
they quarrel with friends ;— मित्रद्रोहः

11 These six defects are like swords
cutting off men in
their prime. These, not death, kill.
May you prosper !

12 The man who commits adultery
with the wife of

शतानि मानवान् घ्नन्ति न मृत्युः
भद्रमस्तु ते

of one who trusts him, the man
who has intercourse
with the wife of a guru, the

वृषली पतिः
द्विजः

यस्मिन् यथा वर्तते यो मनुष्य-
स्तस्मिंस्तथा वर्तितव्यं स धर्मः।
मायाचारो मायया वर्तितव्यः
साध्वाचारः साधुना प्रत्युपेयः॥

hmins,

es

tion,

Vedas say

प्रायश्चित्तम्
इति श्रुतिः

जरा रूपं हरति हि धैर्यमाशा
मृत्युः प्राणान् धर्मचर्यामसूया।
कामो ह्रियं वृत्तमनार्यसेवा
क्रोधः श्रियं सर्वमेवाभिमानः॥

the

स्वर्गमुपैति
विद्वान्

The pleasant speaker is very easy
to find, ~~hard~~ O rājā.
Hard to find are speaker and listener of
the beneficially unpleasant.

16 The ~~king~~ rājā's best adviser is the man
who, having dharma in view,
~~in view~~, speaks what's ~~beneficially~~ pleasant or unpleasant
before his lord.

17 For the family, sacrifice a man;
for the village, a family;

त्यजेत् कुलार्थे पुरुषं ग्रामस्यार्थे कुलं त्यजेत्।
ग्रामं जनपदस्यार्थे आत्मार्थे पृथिवीं त्यजेत्॥

23 **Praisworthy karma leads to happiness.**
**In my opinion,**
**omission of such karma leads only**
**to great harm.**

24 **A Veda-ignorant Brahmin cannot perform**
**a** ***śrāddha.***
**A minister ignorant of the six virtues cannot**
**serve a king.**

25 **He rules the world who possesses the**
**six virtues,**
**who knows his ātman, who knows**
**how to handle**
**the ups and downs of finances, who is**
**above suspicion.**

26 **He rules the world whose pleasure**
**and displeasure**
**are effective, who controls the treasury,**
**and guides all policy.**

27 **A world monarch should be content**
**with his honours**
**and the royal umbrella ; he should**
**share his wealth**
**with his servants, and not have sole**
**power of possession.**

28 **Brahmin sees through Brahmin as husband**
**sees through wife ;**
**king sees through minister ; and rājā**
**sees through rājā.**

29 **A death-deserving enemy, if captured,**
**should not be freed.**
**If weak, you should flatter even a**
**death-deserving enemy.**

If ~~When~~ strong, get rid of him. Alive,
he is dangerous.

भयं तस्मात् जायते

30 Control well anger against gods, rājā,
and Brahmins,
as well as against old people, children,
and invalids. बालातुर

31 Never enter into a pointless quarrel.
Only fools do that.
It will save you grief, and
earn you fame. → कीर्ति च लभते लोके

32 No wife wants a eunuch husband.
No people want
a king whose anger is ineffectual,
and favour fruitless.

न तं भर्तारम् इच्छन्ति षण्डं पतिमिव स्त्रियः

33 Intelligence does not always bring wealth,
nor laziness

…nderstand the ways and whys
जानाति वृत्तान्तं
…of the
…and treated
अवमन्यते
…king
…n to adharma,
… absence
…mises kept,

Six virtues (गुण):
1) संधि = peace making
2) विग्रह = sowing dissension
3) यान = technique of attacking
4) आसन = yogic posture
5) द्वैधीभाव = Knowledge of options — "diplomacy"
6) समाश्रय = Treating equally

प्राणिहिता वाक्

अतिक्रान्त



the ultra-heroic, अतिशूर
the ultra-ascetic, and those who take
pride in their wisdom.

64 She stays away from people who have
too many ~~all the~~ virtues, अतिगुण
and those who have none. She dislikes निर्गुण
the all-virtuous,
the un-virtuous. She wanders like
an unpredictable cow. उन्मत्ता गौ

65 Veda-study's fruits are *agnihotr* sacrifices ;
*śruti's* fruits are
nobility of character ; women's fruits
are sex-pleasure
and ~~children~~ sons ; wealth's fruits are gifts
and luxuries. रति पुत्र फला नारी

66 The man who performs rituals with
wealth earned through
adharma gets no fruits after death ;
his means are wrong.

67 The strong-charactered man does not
face ~~find~~ fear in
deserts, forests, forts, calamities,
and violence.

68 The roots of progress are : energy,
self-control, skill,
steadiness, perseverance, and acting after
mature planning. समारम्भो विद्धि

69 The ascetic's strength is tapasyā,
the Veda-knower's
strength is Brahman, the strength
of the wicked
is power to harm, the strength of the
virtuous is ~~forgiveness~~ forbearance.

हिंसा बलम् असाधुनां क्षमा गुणवतां बलम्

न तत् परस्य संदध्यात् प्रतिकूलं यदात्मनः।
संग्रहेणैष धर्मः स्यात् कामाद् अन्य प्रवर्तते ॥



70 These eight do not affect vows ; water,
roots, fruits, milk,
curds, ghee, a Brahmin's orders,
a guru's commands.

71 Never do to others what you don't
want done to you —
that, briefly, is dharma. The rest
is selfish kāma.

72 Transform anger with non-anger, the
uncharactered man
with character, the miser with gifts,
falseness with truth.

73 Never put trust in a woman,
a cheat, an idler ;
or the fierce, the easily angered,
the self-conceited,
the thief, the ungrateful, and
the non-believing.

स्त्री धूर्तक अलस भीरो चण्ड पुरुषमानिनि चौर कृतघ्न नास्तिकं

74 The man who honours his elders
and attends
to their needs, increases his fame,

अक्रोधेन जयेत् क्रोधम् असाधुं साधुना जयेत्।
जयेत् कदर्यं दानेन जयेत् सत्येन च अनृतम् ॥

can be had

sequience

76 Pity the unlearned, pity intercourse
that is childless,
pity a king's starving subjects, pity
a kingdom in chaos.

शोच्य (grieve)

77 To the long-travelling body, age
brings suffering ;

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18 JANUARY 2004

Professor P. Lal reads of the final attempt made by the Brahma-mind-born rishi Sanat-sujata to persuade raja Dhritarashtra to give up his paralysing depression, in the 213th weekly Sunday session of his complete English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G.D. Birla Sabhagar on 18 January 2004 at 11 a.m.

अनुक्तं यदि ते किंचित वाचा विदुर विद्यते/
तन्मे शुश्रूषते ब्रूहि विचित्राणि हि भाषसे॥

Sanatsujāta: Sanatkumāra — is one of the four Sanakādis, mind-born sons of Brahmā. They are incarnations of "sattva" — at the age of four they learned the Vedas and always travelled together; celibates forever. SANAKA, SANAKADANA, SANĀTANA, and SANATKUMĀRA.

The four Kumāras had taken incarnation before the present Brahmā began the work of creation (Devī Bhāgavata, Skandha I; Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Skandha 7)

MAHABHARATA VOL 90 MAY 1976

# The Mahābhārata

*The Sanat-sujāta-parava in the Udyoga Parva*

## SECTION 41

1 "If anything remains unsaid, Vidura,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"tell it to me now. Your words are
most fascinating."

2 Vidura replied : "Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the ancient
immortal celibate
ṛṣi Sanat-sujāta was heard to say,
'There is no death.'

3 He will explain to you, mahārāja,
and answer
the questions you have openly asked
or kept hidden."

4 "Don't *you* know what that immortal
ṛṣi will tell me ?"
asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra. "If you are wise,
you should tell me."

23 ~~The person~~ Who uses, O rājā,
the strength of tapasyā
to build brahmacarya
becomes like a child, — बाल्यमभ्येति
and finally conquers
the terror of death.

24 ~~For~~ Karma, O Kṣatriya, no matter
how holy, can only
attain the material.
But the learned get Brahman
with the help of knowledge.
Knowledge brings freedom."

25 "What is the shape," कथं रूपं तदम्
asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra, →
"of the Ultimate Absolute, अमृतमक्षरम्
which the wise man sees
in this world ? Is it white, पदम्
red, black, blue, or golden ?"

26 "It may seem to be white,
red, black, ~~blc~~ blue, or golden," न पृथिव्यां तिष्ठति
said Sanat-sujāta,
"but nothing on earth, नान्तरिक्षे नैतत्
on sky, or on sea,
has the form of Brahman. समुद्रे सलिलं

27 It is not in the stars, न तारकासु न च
it is not in lightning ;
it cannot be found → विद्युदाश्रितं
in the clouds, in the air,
in the moon, in the sun, च चाभ्रेषु दृश्यते
among the gods,

28 In the Ṛg, or the Yajur, रूपमस्य
in the Sāma, or Atharva ;
it cannot be found

A sāma which worships Brahmā in his sabhā (Vana Sabha Parva (11:30)) possesses the power to cure fainting fits. Vasiṣṭha restored Indra to consciousness with this sāma (Śānti Parva 281:21)



in the psalms, O rāja,
the Rathantara, Bārhadratha,
or in the mahā vows. महाव्रते

29 It cannot be grasped
by the strength of the mind.
It is outside the doom
at the end of Kāla. → अन्तको अपि विनाशकाले
It cannot be seen.
It is fine as the edge
of a razor, it is vast क्षुरधारया। समं
like the shape of the vastest
of mountains one sees.

30 It is the base of things; it is *amṛta*; सा प्रतिष्ठा तदमृतं
it is the universe;
it is mighty; it is Brahman. It is लोकास्तद् ब्रह्म
beginning and end. तद् यशः

31 It rises beyond
the play of the opposites;
it reveals itself
in the form of the worlds.
The poets declare → वाचो विकारं कवयो वदन्ति
its changeless glory
in their changing words.
It's the strength of the world.
Who knows this, gets *amṛta*."
ये तद् विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति

SECTION 45

1 Sanat-sujata continued:
"Grief, anger, greed, kāma, pride,
laziness, delusion,
malice, hankering for profit, infatuation,
jealousy, calumny —

शोकः क्रोधश्च लोभश्च कामो मानः परासुता।
ईर्ष्या मोहो विधित्सा च कृपासूया जगुप्सुता।

and living alone
when all has been given ;
and not expecting
recompense from a friend ;
if required, giving all.

14 The *sāttvika* man who is capable
of such selflessness
must first withdraw his five senses ~~from~~
from sensual objects.

15 Tapasyā is the cultivation of such

यत् तच्छुक्रं महज्ज्योतिर्दीप्यमानं महद् यशः।
तद् वै देवा उपासते तस्मात् सूर्यो विराजते।
योगिस्तं प्रपश्यन्ति भगवन्तं सनातनम् ॥

ieve what
ture of
rs speech-yajña,
& desire, — संकल्प ~~truth,~~
re excellent
~~Let me~~ Most excellent of all Brahman-knower.

शुक्राद् ब्रह्म प्रभवति ब्रह्म शुक्रेण वर्धते।
तच्छुक्रं ज्योतिषां मध्येऽतप्तं तपति तापनम्।
योगिनस्तं प्रपश्यन्ति भगवन्तं सनातनम् ॥

man.

→ योगे सर्वमिदं प्रतिष्ठितम्

s this
-death.

s, O rājā.

*

The ~~child-like~~ immature adult
is also unable, O rājā,
to find the true peace.

20 Control all the senses, and steadfastly
seek Brahman.
Relax the mind; transcend joy and anger,
praise and blame.

21 Live in this manner, and follow ~~me~~, O Kṣatriya,
the advice of the Vedas
~~Vedas~~ where relevant — and see Brahman.
~~I am sure of this.~~" Listen to me, O learned one."

विदुर

*SECTION 46*

1 Sanat-sujāta continued:
"The Divine Seed blazes with an
intense radiance:
it is fiercely famous; the gods
worship it;
the sun shines with its splendour;
and yogis
see in that radiance the presence
of the eternal.

2 Brahmā creates with that Seed, Brahmā
grows with it.
It enters bodies, and glows with
light and heat.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence
of the eternal.

3 The five subtle elements
emerged from Brahmā;
the five gross elements

शुक्र
clear, pure,
* spotless,
name of Agni,
the planet Venus,
brightness, light,
juice,
essence of
anything,
semen,
* seed of
male or female
good action,
gold,
wealth

"The yogis behold the sempiternal blessed Lord."
(van Buitenen)

duality

अन्तरिक्षे

from them made the body.

In the skyey inter-space ~~In the heart's shade~~

are the twin gods.

उभौ देवौ = ईश्वर and जीव

gods and anti gods

But the Sun of the sun,

the base of the earth

and the sky, is Brahman.

Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

4 The Seed is the sustenance

of the twin gods,

of heaven and earth,

...

...the Seed

...vellous oceans.

...e the presence of the eternal.

समुद्रा महान्तः

8

...destination

...f its karma.

...s

...the realm

...e the presence of the eternal.

...rceive it

...ive it

...ath.

...e the presence of the eternal.

...~~arded by~~

...s — ~~ten~~ 6

...s waters

My Transcreation (p. 43 of Katha Up.)

न संदृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य
न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।
हृदा मनीषा मनसाभिकॢप्तो
य एतद् विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

Katha : 2 : 9

Eyes
cannot see Its form
None
can see It with sight
It
is revealed in the heart
Only
with the help of meditation.
Who
knows It, becomes immortal.

of enchantment.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

8 For half a month the bee hovers
over flowers,
the other half she sucks honey ;
so the lord
of the body does karma in this world —
and returns.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

संचित्य भ्रमरो मधु

9 Without plumes, he gathers plumes,
and perches flapping
in an *aśvattha*-tree of golden leaves,
before flying away :
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

हिरण्यपर्णमश्वत्थं

10 From fullness comes fullness ; fullness
what remains
he presence of the eternal.

पूर्णात् पूर्णान्युद्धरन्ति पूर्णात् पूर्णानि चक्रिरे।
हरन्ति पूर्णात् पूर्णानि
पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते

Up. text (Wedding Vedic Ceremony, p.32)

11 it,
and flows into it ;
so do Agni and Soma, and the
world of creatures.

12 Whatever is, is born from that —
that should be known.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence
of the eternal.

13 In-breath merges with breath ; breath
with the moon :
moon with the sun ; and sun with
that Ultimate.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

अपान

प्राण

14 The *hamsa*-swan stands in the
lake of the world,
one foot invisible, symbolising death
and non-death.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

मृत्युर्नामृतं

15 The innermost ātman,
the size of a thumb,
moves with the body.
But fools do not see
the adorable ātman
who is lord of the body.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

अङ्गुष्ठमात्र पुरुषान्तरात्मा

16 It is present in men
who have knowledge, and those
who have not ; it is present
in those who have *amṛta*
and those who have not.
The difference is this —
for those who are free,
it flows in a thick,
honey-sweet stream.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

मध्व उत्सं समाप्नु

17 To the man who has knowledge
[illegible] ble ;
[illegible] rituals,
[illegible] yours !
[illegible] ours !
[illegible] he presence of the eternal.

नाहं सदासत्कृतः स्यां न॥
मृत्युर्न चामृत्युरमृतं मे कुतः स्यात्।
सत्यानृते सत्यसमानबन्धे
सतश्च योनिरसतश्चैक एव॥

[illegible] a in ~~whom~~ whose radiance
[illegible] has पावक
[illegible] he presence of the eternal.

19 Whatever scatters away in a multitudinous
susurrus of wings
must come and repose in the centre
of centres.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

20 The eye cannot see it ;

यः सहस्रं सहस्राणां पक्षान्
संतप्य सम्पतेत् ।
मध्यमे मध्ये आगच्छेदपि
चेत् स्यान्मनोजवः ॥

its truth.

eves ;

he presence of the eternal.

es
goodness,

by motions of goodness,
are led to destruction.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

22 *I am free of decay,*
*free of life, free of death,*
*free of re-birth and amṛta,*
*free of truth and untruth,*
*right and wrong. I repose*
*in the Ultimate Eternal.*
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

23 What is good and bad
has no meaning for him
who reposes in knowledge.
That man has discovered
the incredible sweetness
of the honey of non-death.
Yogis see in that radiance the presence of the eternal.

न साधुना नोत
असाधुना

15 FEBRUARY 2004

Professor P. Lal reads of Dhritarastra's fear of the prowess of Arjuna in case the peace negotiations fail, and Duryodhana assuring his father that he, Karna and Duhsasana are capable of frustrating any military designs of the Pandavas in the 217th weekly Sunday session of his complete English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G.D. Birla Sabhagar on 15 February 2004 at 11 a.m.

संजय

54 Even the liberated ṛṣis, who serenely
watch the drama
of human life, rejoice at happiness and
grieve at sorrow.

सुखैर्भवन्ति सुखिन:
दुःखेन दुःखिता:

55 Why shouldn't I give in to grief?
I have sons,
a kingdom, a wife, grandsons, friends —
hundreds of reasons.

56 What must I do in the impending
crisis? All I see
is the certain destruction of all
the Kauravas.

विनाशं पश्यामि
कुरुणाम्

57 The dice-game began it — the doom
of the Kurus
is near — through the wickedness of
that greedy fool.

पापमिदं लोभात्

58 Such is endless Kāla, which makes
all things happen.
I am tied to the wheel of Kāla,
I cannot escape.

नास्य शक्यं पलायितुम्

अवशोऽहम् तदा तात पुत्राणाम् निहते शते।
श्रोष्यामि निनदं स्त्रीणां कथं मां मरणं स्पृशेत्॥



59 What should I do? How? Where can
I go, Saṃjaya?
Kāla will wipe out the race of
foolish Kurus/Kauravas.

60 My hundred sons slaughtered, and the wailing
of the women
on the battlefield! I am lost! Saṃjaya, tāta,
dear one, I want to die.

61 Like wind-fanned flames burning up consuming
dry grass in summer,
the mace-wielding Pāṇḍava/Bhima and Arjuna
will kill my people."

SECTION 52

Session 217
15 Feb 2004
Gita
p. 2218

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra continued: "He who never
speaks untruths,
who has Arjuna/Dhananjaya on his side, can conquer
the three worlds.

2 I think about this all the time,
but I know none
who can, from a chariot, oppose
the Gāṇḍīva-wielder.

3 Who can equal the Gāṇḍīva-wielder
when he fires
winged heart-piercing हृदयाच्छिद arrows and *nālika*
pipe-missiles?

4 Those bulls of the brave Bhāratas — Droṇa
and Karṇa,
hugely powerful, invincible, skilful —
will oppose him,

well as he could ; he wanted the welfare
of his sons,

3 So he made arrangements to assess
the relative military
strengths and weaknesses of the
opposing armies.

4 He came to the conclusion that the
human and superhuman
shakti of the Pāṇḍavas was far
greater than that
of the Kauravas, so he said
to Duryodhana :

5 "This thought keeps troubling me,
Duryodhana. I am
not speculating. I see and feel
the truth of this.

6 You are embarking on something that
will ruin the world.
It is against honour and full of
adharma. It is
mischievous. I cannot endorse your hatred
of the Pāṇḍavas.

7 All creatures love their offspring, and
do whatever they can
to help them by acting constantly
for their good and welfare.

8 You can see this in benefactors too.
Good men try to
repay the good done them by pleasing
their benefactors.

9 Agni will remember the service of
Arjuna in Khāṇḍava

and support him and Bhīma against
the Kaurava forces.

10 Dharma and other heaven-dwellers
will, naturally,
when asked, help the Pāṇḍavas —
their own children.

धर्मादय: दिवौकस:

11 Their anger will be as ~~powerful as~~ terrible
as the thunderbolt
when they protect the Pāṇḍavas from Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Kṛpa, and others.

12 The lion-~~men~~ brave sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
skilled in weapons,
united with the gods, will blind
normal human eyes.

13 And he who possesses the magnificent,
invincible Gāṇḍīva,
and the two divine and inexhaustible
arrow-filled quivers,

धनुरुत्तमम्

14 He who flies the ape-symbolled banner
which waves as
serenely as smoke, whose chariot is peerless
in the ~~sea-girt~~ four-oceaned earth,

वानरध्वज ध्वज: चतुरन्ते

15 The ~~sound~~ noise of whose chariot, to human
ears, is like
the reverberation of clouds, and death-
fearful to foes,

16 He who is renowned in this world
for superhuman feats,
whom earth-rulers acknowledge as victor
of the gods,

17 He who can, without being noticed,
string five hundred arrows,

शतानि पञ्च

"Go through life as bird through sky, as fish through water. Leave no trace behind." (Red Indian saying)



23 The path of the happy-in-wisdom muni प्रज्ञानतृप्त
cannot be seen,
just as the path of sky-soaring birds
cannot be seen. शकुनीनामिवाकाशे पदं

24 The man who renounces his home
in favour of mokṣa
finds the eternal worlds of radiant
celestial felicity."

Session 220
7 March 2004
(Gita Press
p. 2246)

## SECTION 64

once —

उत्सृज्यैव गृहान् यस्तु
मोक्षमेवाभिमन्यते /
लोकास्तेजोमया स्तस्य
कल्पन्ते शाश्वता दिवि ||

hared शकुनौ

the संहचारिणौ

but he kept
his sense of direction, and gave
hot chase.

4 A holy man, a muni of an āshram,
who had just finished
his evening meditation, saw the fowler
chasing the birds.

महीचरम्

5 To the earth-runner pursuing the
sky-roamers, अन्तरिक्षगौ
the holy man addressed this śloka,
O Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

7 MARCH 2004

Professor P. Lal reads of Vidura's parables to persuade Duryodhana to make peace with the Pandavas, Duryodhana's rejection of Dhritarashtra's advice, and Sanjaya's paean to Krishna as the Supreme Divinity, in the 220th weekly Sunday session of his complete sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 7 March 2004 at 11 a.m.

9 The bird-killer crept upon them while
 they were pecking
at each other, caught in death's net,
 and seized both. मृत्युपाशवशानुगौ

10 Like the bickering birds, quarrelling
 cousins who fight
over their wealth are quickly trapped
 by their enemies.

11 The duty of cousins is not to
 quarrel, but
to live together, eating, talking and
 helping each other.

सम्भोजनं संकथनं
संप्रश्नोऽथ समागमः।
एतानि ज्ञातिकार्याणि
न विरोधः कदाचन ॥

lors

who prosper

to the hands

एवं ये ज्ञातयोऽर्थेषु मिथो गच्छन्ति

## SECTION 68

1 "Arjuna and Vasudeva's son Krishna,"
said Saṁjaya,
"are excellent bowmen, born for the
world's welfare.

2 Māyā surrounds the *cakra* of Krishna.
Though five cubits
in diameter, he can hurl it any
size he wishes.

3 It is refulgent, but invisible to
the Kauravas. It
gauges a foe's weaknesses. The Pāṇḍavas
are proud of it.

4 The tremendously strong descendant of
Madhu, Krishna,
conquered in battle Naraka, Śambara, Kaṁsa,
and Cedi.

5 Puruṣottama Krishna has an ātman
that, by willing, alone,
can subjugate the earth, the sky,
and heaven.

6 You have repeatedly interrogated me
regarding the
weaknesses and strengths of the Pāṇḍavas.
Briefly, therefore,—

7 If the whole world were on one side,
on the other, the strength of Krishna would
surpass the world's strength.

कालचक्रं जगच्चक्रं युगचक्रं च केशवः ।
आत्मयोगेन भगवान् परिवर्तयतेऽनिशम् ॥ #

*The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [V : 68 / 8 - 15]* 27

8 The whole world cannot reduce Janārdana-Krishna
into ashes,
but Janārdana-Krishna can reduce the world
into ashes.

9 Where dharma, truth, simplicity, and
humility are,
Govinda-Krishna is. And where Krishna is,
there victory is.

10 Purușottama Krishna, the innermost
ātman of all ... na-Krishna,
... sky,
... na makes
... foolish,
... rishna
... and
... le Bhagavān,

भस्म कुर्याज्जगदिदं मनसैव जनार्दनः ।
न तु कृत्स्नं जगच्छक्तं भस्म कर्तुम् जनार्दनम् ॥

यतः सत्यं यतो धर्मो यतो ह्रीरार्जवम् यतः ।
ततो भवति गोविन्दो यतः कृष्णस्ततो जयः ॥

क्रीडन्निव
अधर्मनिरतान्

#

11 Though lord of the world, Hari-Krishna,
this supreme mahā-yogi
is always active, like a villager
tilling his soil.

15 This is the māyā of Keśava-Krishna
that bewilders the worlds,
but it does not bewilder those who
have realised him."

तेन वञ्चयते लोकान् माययायोगेन केशवः ।
ये तमेव प्रपद्यन्ते न ते मुह्यन्ति मानवाः ॥

मोहवशमापन्नाः क्रूरं कर्म निषेवते



38 His outbursts make him even more
confused till,
driven by folly, he gets involved
in cruel karma. पापकर्म

39 Such ill karma leads to intermixture
of the castes. संकरं
Such intermixture is the height of vice.
and leads to hell.

40 If he does not awake soon, Krishna,
he goes to hell.
Only wisdom wakes ; only wisdom's eye
can save him. प्रज्ञाचक्षुस्तारिष्यति

41 Wisdom will direct this man to study
of the śāstras.
So he re-discovers dharma, whose fruit
in humility. शास्त्रनिष्ठः पुनर्धर्मं तस्य

42 Humility makes him renounce misdeeds, ह्रीरङ्गमुत्तमं
and he regains dignity.
The greater a man's dignity, the
greater is the man.

श्रीमान् स यावद् भवति तावद् भवति पुरुषः

43 The dharm-firm serene ātman dedicated
to the yoga of
action, never thinks of adharma, never
turns to vice.

44 The ~~person~~ fool without humility is neither
man nor woman.
He has no claim to dharma ; he is
like a Śūdra.

45 The man with humility pleases the gods,
the *pitrs*, and
his own ātman. He attains the non-death amṛta
of good karma.

अह्रीको वा विमूढो नैव स्त्री न पुनः पुमान् ।
नास्याधिकारो धर्मेऽस्ति यथा शूद्रस्तथैव सः ॥

Madhusudana-Krishna,
46 And you, O ~~slayer of Madhu~~, have seen
all this happen
to me — the way I have lived after
losing my kingdom.

47 We will on no account give up
our dignity.
Far better to die in an attempt
to recover it. → वधश्चेदपि साधु तत्

श्रियं

48 The best idea obviously is to share
a common prosperity --
we and they united in peace and
mutual dignity, O Madhava-Krishna.

49 It would be heinous karma to profit
after their destruction,
to enjoy the kingdom after killing
~~the sons of Kuru~~ all the Kauravas.

रौद्रं कर्म

शूद्र करोति शुश्रूषां वैश्या वै पण्यजीविका
वयं वधेन जीवामः कपालं ब्राह्मणै-
⊛ र्वृतम्॥

...lated

...w much worse

...urus
on both sides!

It is heinous to kill them. ~~Why~~ → तेषां वधोऽतिपापीयान्

here is no glory in war ~~have we fought~~ → किं नो युद्धेऽस्ति शोभनम्

52 Kṣatriya-dharma can be heinous, ~~and we~~
We are born Kṣatriyas.
This is our svadharma. Anything else
would be adharma.

पाप:

53 A Śūdra serves, a Vaiśya lives
by commerce,
we are enjoined to kill, a Brahmin
lives on alms →

⊛ कपाल: cup bowl, dish, skull-bowl

स नः स्वधर्मोऽधर्मो वा वृत्तिरन्या विगर्हिता

क्षत्रियः क्षत्रियं हन्ति मत्स्यो मत्स्येन जीवति।
श्वा श्वानं हन्ति दाशार्ह पश्य धर्मो यथागतः॥
42

*[V : 72 | 54 - 61] The P. Lāl Transcreation*

54 Kṣatriya kills Kṣatriya, fish lives
on fish, dog
eats dog; Each to its own dharma,
O Dāśārha-Krishna.

55 War is nothing but Kali; countless lives
are wasted in war, Krishna.
One fights according to plan, but victory
or defeat

56 Is uncertain, just as one cannot wish
life or death.
Joy and sorrow appear only at their
appointed times.

57 One man may kill many; many together
may kill one,
A coward may kill a famous, valiant,
tested hero.

58 Both cannot win, both cannot lose;
but waste and
loss harm both. The deserter loses
honour and life.

59 So war is an absolute evil.
Who doesn't hit back
at violence? But what's victory or defeat
to the dead, O Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna?

60 I think defeat is not much better
than death, Krishna.
Because the victor also has to suffer
most grievously.

61 Some who are dear to him are sure
to be killed.
Enfeebled by the loss of his sons
and brothers,

सर्वथा वृजिनं युद्धं को घ्नन् न प्रतिहन्यते।
हतस्य च हृषीकेश समौ जयपराजयौ॥

the losing dice, the last & worst of 4 yugas — 432,000 years beginning 18 Feb. 3102 B.C. discord, quarrel, contention (personified as son of Krodha & Hiṁsā, and producing by his sister Durukti (Calumny), two children Bhaya + Mṛtyu)

बलहीन

62 He will live on in a state of
semi-consciousness and
dejection The gentle, humble, compassionate,
dignified, and wise

63 Are indiscriminately slaughtered ; the
vicious escape,
After enemies are butchered, remorse
afflicts the victor.

64 Those who survive organise revenge
by assembling
an army that will wipe out
the victor.

65 Some try assassination as a means of
solving the problem.
Victory breeds hatred, the vanquished
live in misery.

66 Only rejection of thoughts of victory
or defeat brings
peace. A man who makes an enemy
lives in fear.

67 He sleeps in a snake-infested house,
because he never
has peace of mind. The foe-annihilater
earns no fame ;

68 He gets its opposite all his life
from other men.
No matter how long it is fought,
a war never ends.

69 One survivor in his enemy's family
tells the story
of his wrong forever. Hate is not
quenched by hate

28 MARCH 2004

13

Professor P. Lal reads of Draupadi's bitter denunciation of the attempts at peace-making by Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva, and her passionate appeal to Krishna that he should ensure that her humiliation does not go unpunished when he meets the Kauravas as the emissary of the Pandavas, in the 223rd weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 28 March 2004 at 11 a.m.

not denouncing you.

3 Whatever good you think you can do
for the Pāṇḍavas,
I am sure you can do that a
thousand times over.

4 You, your friends and well-wishers
are what you
should be, born in families ~~honoured~~ pūjā-respected
by the rājās.

सर्वराज्ञाभिपूजिताः

5 Wolf-waisted Bhīma, Vrokodara, human dharma
and ~~good dharma~~ god-dharma
are different. To equate the two
is to be confused.

जिज्ञासन्तो हि धर्मस्य

दैवमानुषयोर्जना

6 What leads to a man's prosperity
may also lead
to his ruin. That is the nature
of human karma.

7 The karma recommended by wise men
can have consequences
opposite to those ~~expected, like~~ winds
suddenly shifting direction.

अन्यथा परिदृष्टानि कविभिर्दोषदर्शिभिः ।
अन्यथा परिवर्तन्ते वेगा इव नभस्वतः ।

सुमन्त्रितं सुनीतं च न्यायतः
कर्म दैवेनापि विरुध्यते



8 Indeed, fate may ordain that the karma
of a well-advised,
justice-seeking, non-harming man has quite
the opposite results.

9 And it is possible for man to overcome
the effects of some
external circumstances such as cold and heat,
hunger and thirst.

"You are free to choose" (Gita)

10 Many examples can be found of
human beings
acting beyond their karma, in the manner
of free agents.

यदन्यद् दिष्टभावस्य
पुरुषस्य स्वयंकृतं

11 Free or otherwise, karma is the only ~~way~~
~~way~~ for man, O Pāṇḍava Bhīma!
Know this and act, and leave fruit
to fate and freewill.

एवं बुद्धिः
प्रवर्तेत फलम्
स्याद् उभयान्वये

12 The man who acts on this belief
is not delighted
if he succeeds nor depressed
if he fails.

13 That was what I meant, O Bhīmasena;
I did not mean
that victory would be ours in a war
against our foes.

14 I say all this to you, because I
want you to know ~~that~~
even ~~that~~ a worried man should have hope
and not get ~~depressed~~ desolated.

15 Early in the morning I will go
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and try to work out a peace
honourable to you.

य एवं कृतबुद्धिः स कर्मस्वेव प्रवर्तते ।
न असिद्धौ व्यथते तस्य न सिद्धौ हर्षमश्नुते ॥

CHIRAÑJĪVĪS

1) Narada
2) Vyāsa
3) Hanumān (for service to Rāma)
4) Vibhīṣaṇa (Rāvaṇa's brother)
5) Maru (grandson of Agnivarṇa still alive in a state of samādhi, waiting to repopulate the earth with Kṣatriyas)
6) Paraśurāma (for exterminating the Kṣatriyas)
7) Bali, the virtuous Daitya antigod who lost his kingdom to Viṣṇu in the Dwarf incarnation, alive so long as people honour him
8) Aśvatthāman +
9) Kṛpa for slaughtering the sleeping Pāṇḍava sons, doomed to suffer eternally
10) Mārkaṇḍeya, or Dīrghāyu, who knows past, present + future, who consoles the Pāṇḍavas in forest exile

*The P. Lāl Transcreation*

l the

l by Nārada,

ṛṣi Devala,
Śunaka, Bali,

iḥ, Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana,
ṇīmaṇḍavya, Kauśika,

da, Ghaṭajānuka,
ārāśarya, Sālika,

pāla, Akṛtavraṇa,
na of ~~great~~ mahā tapasyā

rāma,
Madhusūdana-
ishna,
nda-Krishna, said:

d ~~than~~

the ~~royal~~ rājarṣis, and those who practise
severe tapasyā, ~~are~~ are witnesses
~~are witnesses~~ to the ancient feats of gods
~~of gods~~ and anti-gods, O mahā-minded one.

72 They are eager to see the Kṣatriya
lords of the earth,
the rājās and their sabhās, including
yourself, O Janārdana-Krishna.

73 We are on our way to witness this
magnificent spectacle,
and to hear the words spoken on
dharma-and-*artha*, O Mādhava-Krishna,

74 When you address the Kurus
in the presence
Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
Vidura,

75 And you, O tiger of the Yādavas,
will assemble
with others. Your divine
and theirs

76 Are what we look forward to hearing,
words of truth
That is why we are here.
We will meet again,

77 We will see you in the sabhā,
sitting on
celestial seat, radiating energy
and prowess."

## SECTION 84

1 Ten magnificent
chariot-heroes
(continued Vaiśampāyana) escorted
on his mission,

2 With a thousand soldiers and a
Hundreds of others brought provisions
and other material.

3 Janamejaya asked : "What were the
observed
Krishna in the course
of his journey ?"

18 APRIL 2004

priority

Professor P. Lal reads of Krishna's visit to the Pandavas' mother, Kunti, her prolonged complaint about her sufferings in the palace of her fathers-in-law, and Krishna's assurance that he will punish those responsible for her and Draupadi's plight, in the 226th weekly Sunday session of his complete English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 18 April 2004 at 11 a.m.

joking with the Kauravas after being
introduced to them.

कुरून्

maha-illustrious

21 Then the foe-vanquisher, ~~after~~ receiving
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's puja,
with the rājā's permission, left
the palace ~~[illegible]~~

Madhava-Krishna

22 ~~He~~ exchanged greetings and pleasantries
with the Kauravas,
after which he ~~[illegible]~~ proceeded to Vidura's
enchanting house.

रम्यम्

23 Vidura emerged from his house and
honoured ~~him~~ Janardana-Krishna
of the Dāśārhas with ~~every possible~~ auspicious ~~and~~
and desirable gifts.

24 "How can I describe," said Vidura,
"the joy I feel
at your darshan ~~when I see~~ O lotus-eyed one, O innermost
lotus of the heart?"

25 All-dharma-knowing Vidura offered ~~performed~~ Govinda-
~~the rites of~~ Krishna guest-hospitality,
~~hospitality,~~ and enquired from Madhusudana-Krishna
about the Pāṇdavas' health.

या मे प्रीतिः पुष्कराक्ष त्वद्दर्शनसमुद्भवा ।
सा किमाख्यायते तुभ्यमन्तरात्मासि देहिनाम् ॥

म्रियमाणस्य सुहृदो बुद्धिसत्तमः
धीमतः

*The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [V : 90 / 1 - 5]* 23

26 Vidura was the learned and sincere
and dear friend
of the Pāṇḍavas, a wise unmalicious man
of dharma-and-*artha*;

गतरोष

27 Knowing this, Krishna of the Dāśārhas
who could see
everything clearly, told him all about
the plans of the Pāṇḍavas.

सर्वं सविस्तारं

प्रत्यक्ष- दर्शिवान्

Sess. 226
18 April
2007

SECTION 90

Gita, p. 2300

KUNTĪ:
Śūra, a Yādava ruler of the Śūrasenas; capital Mathura on the Yamunā. He had four children: Vasudeva, Kuntī, Samudravijaya and Śrutadevā. Śrutadevā married Damaghoṣa of Cedi; her son is Śiśupāla. When Vasudeva dies, four of his wives committed sati.
SAMUDRAVIJAYA became the father of Nemi (or Ariṣṭanemi), the 22nd Jain tīrthankara. (Nemi is ∴ a cousin of Krishna.) Jains claim Nemi to be far superior to Krishna in physical strength, intelligence, + morality. He was gentle, unostentatious, and chaste.
KUNTĪ was given by Śūra to his childless cousin Kuntibhoja.

āyna continued)

sun;
ians; आदित्यवर्चसम्
nbered her sons,
नराति तनयान् पृथा
had seen
ons;
tes
warriors युधांपति
aid;
noured
to
and
निकृत्या

*37* Who always leads a blameless life,
who is honoured, Madhusūdana. Krishna,
by his mahātmā brothers because
of his goodness —

*38* Tell me, O Vārshneya-Krishna, about ~~the son~~
the son of Mādrī, ~~the~~
the excellent warrior who was always
ready to help me,

*39* The handsome-looking and heroic
son of Pāndu
who is the very life of all
his brothers,

*40* The mahā-powerful one, my son,
the versatile warrior,
the mahā-archer Nakula —
is he well, Krishna?

*41* O mahā-muscled Krishna!
Will I get to see
the accomplished luxury-accustomed ~~warrior~~
mahā-chariot-fighter again?

सर्वैः पुत्रैः प्रियतरा द्रौपदी मे जनार्दन।
कुलीना रूपसम्पन्ना सर्वैः समुदिता गुणैः॥

eant
rishna!

rishna

पुत्रलोकात् पतिलोकं वृण्वाना सत्यवादिनी।
प्रियान् पुत्रान् परित्यज्य पाण्डवाननुरुध्यते॥

d her

*The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [V : 90 / 45 - 52]* 20

Acyuta

45 O Krishna, how is the all-auspicious सर्वकल्याणी
īśvarī Draupadī, noble-born lady,
who once enjoyed the fulfilment
of all her wishes ?

46 How Draupadī has suffered, though दुःखभागिनी
she has five brave
husbands, all flaming, foe-crushing,
heroic bowmen !

47 I have not seen truth-speaking Draupadī,
O foe-destroying Krishna,
for fourteen years, nor has she seen
her sons

न नूनं कर्मभिः पुण्यैरश्नुते पुरुषः to
द्रौपदी चेत् तथावृत्ता सुखम् ved nothing
नाश्नुते सुखमव्ययम् ॥

49 When I ~~think of how she was dragged~~ recall how Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
was dragged into the sabhā,
I stop admiring Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, ~~Bhīma~~, Bibhatsu
Bhīma, and the twins.

50 Nothing shocked me more than to see न मे दुःखतरं
Draupadī dragged, → किंचिद्
in her period, in the presence of her
fathers-in-law. → भूतपूर्वं

51 Anger and greed made the scoundrel ततोऽधिकम्
drag her inside
एकवस्त्रां the sabhā in her single dress before स्त्रीधर्मिणीं
all the Kauravas.

52 Sitting there and silently watching द्रौपदीं यत्
were Dhṛtarāṣṭra, श्वशुराणां
mahārāja Bāhlika, Kṛpa, Somadatta, समीपगाम्
and the Kauravas.

You have spoken honestly, as a friend
to a friend.

3 Your words have the dharma-and-*artha*
expected of you.
You have spoken to me like a father
or a mother.

4 What you say is true and deserves
careful consideration :
but let me explain to you why
I have come here.

5 I am aware of the hostility of
of the Kauravas and
the ill-ātmaned sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra —
yet [illegible]

6 [illegible] destruction
[illegible] will free
[illegible]ied

7 Even if a man fail in the completion
of a deed of dharma,
his effort alone is meritorious. There is
no doubt of this.

8 And if a man plans but fails to implement
a vicious act,
the fruits are still his to suffer. Dharma-
knowers say so.

9 That is why I make honest attempts
to negotiate peace
among the Kauravas and Sṛñjayas.
The alternative is doom.

*The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [V : 93 / 10 - 17]* 15

*10* This great calamity facing the Kurus Kauravas
is brought about the handiwork
of by Karṇa and Duryodhana. The others
are mere followers.

*11* The wise say that a man is heartless
if he fails, in trying
to the best of his powers, to save
a friend from ruin.

*12* You should seize a friend by his hair
and dissuade him
from wrong-doing. The more one tries, You try,
the lesser the blame.

Vidura

*13* It is right therefore that I should
advise Duryodhana
and his ministers with words that lead
to dharma-and-*artha*.

*15* Even if Duryodhana suspects me,
I will have done
my duty and satisfied myself, working
for his good.

*16* Wise men say that a friend who
does not mediate
when relatives quarrel cannot be called
a friend at all.

14 Without resorting to māyā-trickery, the good
I will continue to work
for the welfare of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the Kṣatriyas
the Pāṇḍavas, and all Kṣatriyas.

*17* [illegible] of adharma
may not say that
Krishna did not try to stop the warring
Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas,

2 MAY 2004

Professor P. Lal reads of Krishna's starting the peace negotiations by warning the Kauravas of the doom awaiting the Kaurava dynasty if the talks fail, Parashurama's additional warning that Arjuna and Krishna are the invincible two-in-one Nara-Narayana, and Kanva's narration of the story of Indra's charioteer Matali to impress Duryodhana and his followers, in the 228th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at S. D. Birla Sabhagar on 2 May 2004 at 11 a.m.

Duḥśāsana offered a luxurious seat
to Sātyaki.

58 Viviṃśati offered a golden seat, that
Krishṇa, to
Kṛtavarman. As for Duryodhana
and Karṇa,

59 Those two self-confident mahātmās
shared a seat.
The Gāndhāra-rājā Śakuni, surrounded by
Gāndhāra chiefs,

60 Shared a seat with his son,
was decorated with gems, and covered
with white deer-skin.

61 Vidura sat next to
Krishṇa. The rājās
looked intensely and long at the chief
of the Dāśārhas

62 As if they were drinking *amṛta*, but
remained unsatiated.
Krishṇa, dressed in saffron, looked like
an *atasī*-flower.

63 He sat in the middle of the sabhā हेम्नीवोपाहितो
; like a sapphire studded in gold. मणिः

कृपा = desire to alleviate others' pain
अनुकम्पा : trembling with empathy
करुणा = feeling others' pain
आनृशंस = not injuring others *

Session 228
2 MAY 2007
Gita p. 2319

### SECTION 95

1 All sat down. The rājās were all silent.
~~silent. Excellent~~ His teeth glistening,
~~toothed~~ Krishna said in his ~~drum~~ dundubhi-drum
~~drum~~ resonant voice, → सुदंष्ट्रो दुन्दुभिस्वनः

2 Reverberating like clouds at the end
of summer — looking
~~looking at Dhṛtarāṣṭra but~~ addressing the sabhā,
Mādhava-Krishna said:

3 "I am here because I feel that it
is still possible, O Bhārata,
the to prevent bloodshed of Kaurava and
and Pāṇḍava heroes.

4 You know all there is in the world
to know;
what is there left for me to add,
foe-crushing O king?

5 O Ruler of the earth, your dynasty excels पार्थिव
all these rājās:
it is noble, learned in *śruti*, it has
guna- all the virtues.

6 ~~Compassion, non-injury, involvement with
and desire to remove~~

6 Pity, sympathy, compassion, O Bharata, *
not harming others,

परपुरंजय no city-conqueror should behave as
you have behaved.

36 Never let your pride insult inferior
or superior. O rājā!
Gather wisdom, avoid greed, control
your ego - ahamkāra;

कृतप्रज्ञो वीतलोभो → निरहंकार दान्तः क्षान्तो मृदुः सौम्य प्रजाः पालय

37 Cultivate discipline, peace, gentleness;
protect your subjects;
never challenge anybody without knowing
his potential first.

स्वस्ति गच्छ

38 Go. And may you prosper. Never act
as you now did.

NILAKANTHA

1) Kākudīka: "related to humps" (elephants, camels)

2) śuka: "parrot" - bewildering like a parrot seeing its reflection in water

3) nāka: "heaven" → creating hallucinations

4) aksi samtarjana: "hurting the eye" chemical or gas?

5) samtāna: "continuity" → rapid fire missiles shot in succession

6) nartaka: "causing to dance" creating panic flight

7) ghora: "horrific" causing mass destruction

8) āsyamodaka: "stone-sweetmeat" pleasant soporific with gruesome after-effects.

lful

ssiduously

able feat → सुमहत् कर्म कृतं पुरा

Gāndiva-

Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

lika,

taka, Ghora,

कामक्रोधौ लोभमोहौ मदमानौ मात्सर्याहंकृती



43 Despatch their victims to certain death.
They correspond to
eight passions : kāma, anger, greed, vanity,
insolence, pride,

44 Malice, and selfishness. Affected by them,
men become as if
possessed ; they lose their senses and
become stupefied.

45 Struck by them, men sleep heavily,
or wander restless,
act crazily, wildly defecate and urinate,
weep and laugh.

46 It is difficult to face Arjuna on
the battlefield ; निर्माता
his friend is world-creator, all-karma- सर्वलोकानामीश्वर
knower Nārāyaṇa. → सर्वकर्मवित्

O Bharata!

47 What man in all the three worlds
can defeat Jishnu Arjuna,
the ape-bannered hero absolutely without
equal in battle ?

48 Partha Arjuna has countless virtues, but he
is excelled by Janardana Krishna.
You know all about Arjuna, the Dhananjaya-Arjuna,
the son of Kuntī.

49 Nara-Nārāyaṇa are Arjuna-and- Keśava-
Krishna. Mahārāja,
know this well. They are the twin Puruṣottama,
the finest-of-men.

50 If you know this already, if you
do not mistrust me, O Bharata,
then take the noble path of peace
with the Pāṇḍavas.

5 When the universe ends, they vanish
from the three worlds ;
then the process of creation starts
again — and again.

6 Others have a brief life-span —
humans, animals,
birds, and creatures that are born
from other creatures.

7 Rājās, who enjoy immense affluence
till the time
of their death, are re-born into good
or bad karma.

8 You should make every effort to
make peace with
Yudhiṣṭhira. Let the Kauravas and the
Pāṇḍavas together rule.

9 Do not say, Duryodhana, "I am strong !"
O bull among men,
one soon finds many who are stronger
than oneself.

10 Physical strength hardly matters to
the really strong.
The Pāṇḍavas, with the prowess of gods,
are really strong.

11 There is the very old story of
Mātali who
was looking for a suitable husband
for his daughter.

12 Three-world-ruling Indra had a
named Mātali,
who had only one daughter, a girl
of renowned beauty.

13 She had the figure of a goddess ; देवरूपिणी
her name was
Guṇakeśī, and she excelled all in
grace and beauty.

14 Mātali and his wife, realising that प्रदानसमयं
the time for giving
her away in marriage had arrived,
became anxious, O rājā. परिचिन्तयन्

धिक् 15 He thought : How sad for a noble,
*cultivated family*
*with the highest traditions to have*
*a daughter*

16 *The mother's family, the father's,*
*and the family*
*into which she marries — all* three face
this daughter problem.

मातुः कुलं पितृकुलं यत्र चैव प्रदीयते
कुलत्रयं संशयितं कुरुते कन्यका सताम् ॥

न च मे रोचते वरः

[illegible] gods, gandharvas, humans,
the various ṛṣis —
he found none among them as suitable
for his daughter.

19 Mātali discussed it one night with his
wife Sudharmā,
and decided to explore the world
of the Nāgas.

20 He said : "I find none among gods
and humans to
equal Guṇakeśī in looks ; perhaps I will
among the Nāgas."

न मे देवमनुष्येषु गुणकेश्याः समो वरः ।
रूपतो दृश्यते कश्चिन्नागेषु भविता ध्रुवम् ॥

36 To fight is futile ; struggle, therefore,
for peace, O king.
With Krishna's help, save your race
from destruction.

37 Nārada, who has extraordinary tapasyā,
is a witness to
*cakra*-and-mace-wielding Krishna, who
is Viṣṇu.

38 Duryodhana listened to all this.
He sighed deeply,
narrowed his eyes, looked at Karṇa,
and laughed loudly.

39 He slapped his elephant-strong thighs.
The ill-minded one
ignored the words of ṛṣi Kaṇva,
and said :

40 "God has made me too, mahā-ṛṣi.
What will be,
will be. I will act as I must.
Why all this noise?"

SECTION 106

1 "Inclined to mischief from birth, motivated
by greed for
others' wealth, given to ignobility, seeking
his own ruin,

2 Bringing misery to relatives and pain
to his friends,
harming his well-wishers and enhancing
his enemies' joy,

3 Why was he not prevented from wrong-doing
by his friends
or by an affectionate bhagavān pitāmaha?"
asked Janamejaya.

Vyāsa or Bhīsma

4 Indeed, bhagavān Bhīşma tried his utmost
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and so did Nārada, attempting to dissuade him.
Listen to what Nārada said:

5 Very few listen to the advice of
well-wishers ; well-wishers

तिष्ठते हि सुहृद्
यत्र न बन्धुस्तत्र
तिष्ठते

ll-wisher,

SAPTARṢIS:

In each Manvantara (Age of Manu) there are different seven ṛṣis.
Since there will be 14 Manvantaras before the Great Deluge, 98 ṛṣis will be born and will have died by then.
The present Manu's Age has the following ṛṣis who are mind-born sons of Brahmā:

MARĪCI
ANGIRAS
ATRI
PULASTYA
VASIṢṬHA
PULAHA
KRATU

The period between the birth and death of a Brahmā is Manvantara

Brahmā's life span is: 30 crores 9 lakhs 17 thousands 386 hundred human years

worth
lighter
eat defect

- about इतिहासं पुरातनं

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a of

bhagavān

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The Saptarṣis are the sātvika aspects of Mahā Viṣṇu who protects the world. In Dvāpara Yuga Viṣṇu assumes the form of Vyāsa.

वत्स (van Buitenen: "calf"!!)

14 *[V : 113 / 13 - 20] The P. Lāl Transcreation*

13 My son! You insulted me, and I do not forgive insult.

The miscreant who insults me is flung

आचारः फलते धर्मं आचारः फलते धनम् ।
आचाराच्छ्रियमाप्नोति आचारो हन्त्यलक्षणम् ॥

...me.

...racter,

आचार = good conduct, good behaviour

15 Dharma's fruit is character; character produces wealth;
character promotes prosperity; character removes all inauspiciousness.

16 Long-lived Lord of birds, go where you like. But never blame
a woman even if you know she is blameworthy.

खगपते

तदायुष्मन् खगपते यथेष्टं
न च ते गर्हणीयाहं गम्यतामितः ।
गर्हितव्या स्त्रियः कचित् ॥

...be

...brouted,

18 Dismissed by Sandili, he flew away where he
had planned, but nowhere saw the required horses.

19 Finest of eloquent speakers Viśvāmitra happened to meet Gālava;
and he said to Gālava, in the presence of Vinatā's son Garuḍa:

20 "Give me the horses that you promised me.
The time has come. But you may do as you like —

21 I have waited long enough, Brahmin, विप्र
so I can wait
a little more. But find out a way
to succeed." → मार्गस्तु निशाम्यताम्

22 Garuḍa said to the disconsolate Gālava:
"O finest of the twice-born Gālava!
Viśvāmitra, in my presence, has repeated
his earlier words.

23 Come, twice-born one, let us discuss and
devise a plan.
You cannot relax unless you give your
guru the horses."

## SECTION 114

1 The most excellent of birds Garuḍa
(continued Nārada)
said to sad Gālava : "Bred by fire
and fanned by wind,
wealth is called Hiraṇya, from hiri,
'golden-yellow.'

2 Wealth is Dhana the supporter, because
it sustains the earth.
Wealth has always existed
for this purpose.

3 When either the eastern or northern
constellation is ascendant
on Śukra, Agni fabricates wealth
for Kubera's treasury.

Friday

4 Guarding that wealth are the gods
called Ajaikapāds

Aja Ekapāds

अहं दौहित्रवान स्यां वै वर एष मम प्रभो ।



*14* Accept my daughter Mādhavī, Gālava prabhu-Lord!
The only favour
I ask is that I be given a
grandson by her."

*15* Gālava accepted the girl, and Garuḍa
said to the king :
"We will see you soon." Saying this,
they left with her.

*16* Reassuring, Saying, "You can now get your horses",
the egg-born one,
with Gālava's permission, flew away
to his abode.

*17* When the bird-rājā had gone,
Gālava wondered
which rājā would offer the best
dowry for her. शुल्क

*18* He decided on the Ikṣvāku Haryaśva,
rājā of Ayodhyā,
a mahā-valiant king, of extraordinary prowess, lord of a
a four-fold army. महावीर्य

*19* Wealth, coins, and luxurious artifacts
were this king's;
he cherished his subjects, was friendly to Brahmins;
he was strong in tapasyā.

*20* The Brahmin Gālava approached King Haryaśva,
Haryaśva, and said : "O Indra-among rājās!
This race-dignity-enhancing girl
whom I have here कुलवर्धिनी

*21* Will be mother of illustrious children,
O Haryaśva,
Take her, after offering me the dowry
that I describe." desire

उन्नतेषु उन्नता षट्सु सूक्ष्मा सूक्ष्मेषु पञ्चसु ।
गम्भीरा त्रिषु गम्भीरोप्वियं रक्ता च पञ्चसु ॥

*The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa (V : 116 / 1 - 7)* 21

*SECTION 116*

1 Rājā Haryaśva, finest of kings, नृपोत्तम
pondered this,
and, sighing deeply at the thought
of a son, said :

2 "This girl has the six desirable swellings,
the five ~~slender~~ desirable slender
and smooth areas, the three deep,
the five pink.

3 Her two posteriors, two thighs, and two
breasts are rounded ;
her head hair, body hair, fingers, nails, and skin
are slender ~~and smooth~~;

not in Crit. Ed.

4 Her voice, navel, and ~~intelligence~~ personality
are deep, and
her palms, soles of her feet, left eye-rim and right eye-rim,
~~and~~ nails are pink.

5 Gods, anti-gods, humans, gandharvas

बहुलक्षणसम्पन्ना

श्रोण्यौ ललाटमूरू च घ्राणं चेति षडुन्नतम् । is of

बहुप्रसवधारिणी

सूक्ष्माणि अङ्गुलिपर्वाणि केशरोमनखत्वचः ॥ er estate, and

स्वरः सत्वं च नाभिश्च त्रिगम्भीरं प्रचक्षते । horses,

पाणिपादतले रक्ते नेत्रान्तौ च नखानि च ॥ ze

अयं कर्ता न क्रियते
कारणं वापि पौरुषे।
यद् यदिच्छेदयं शौरिस्तत्
तत् कुर्यादयत्नतः॥
तं न बुद्ध्यसि गोविन्दं
घोरविक्रमच्युतम्।
आशीविषमिव क्रुद्धं
तेजोरश्मिमनिन्दितम्॥
प्रधर्षयन् महाबाहुं
कृष्णमक्लिष्टकारिणम्।
पतङ्गोऽग्निमिवासाद्य
सामात्यो न भविष्यसि॥

'] The P. Lāl Transcreation

naustibly energetic
~~were humbled~~
~~husband Indra~~ stealing

abha as

h he जन्मान्तरमुपागम्य

lf
purusa,
n do whatever
~~u-~~Krishna.
awesome,
is ~~amazingly~~ valiant
shna;
gy of an

muscled untiring
~~ened~~,
; and your ministers
lying

Session 236
4 July 2004

*SECTION 131*

1 When Vidura finished (continued Vaiśampāyana),
valiant Keśava-Krishna,
~~slayer-of-enemies~~, said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's
son Duryodhana :

वीर्यवान्
शत्रुपूगहा

2 "Deluded wicked fool Suyodhana-Duryodhana!
You think I am alone,
and so it is easy for you to
capture me.

मोहान् मन्यसे
दुर्बुद्धे
सुयोधन

4 JULY 2004

Professor P. Lal reads of Krishna's revelation of his Universal Form before Duryodhana and the Kauravas to convince them to make peace, and his meeting with his aunt Kunti who urges him to inspire martial courage in vacillating Yudhishthira, in the 236th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of the complete Mahabharata of Vyasa at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 4 July 2004 at 11 a.m.

Śiva- ~~Rudra~~ appeared on his chest !

6 The Lokapāla guardians of the universe on his arms !
Agni
from his mouth !
Ādityas,
Sādhyas,
Vasus,
Aśvins,

7 Maruts,
Indra,
The Viśva-devas,
Yakṣas,
Gandharvas,
Rākṣasas !

8 Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma
from one arm !
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
from the other !
Bow-armed Arjuna
on his right !
Plough-wielding Balarāma
on his left !

हली रामश्च सव्यतः

9 Behind him :
Bhīma
Yudhiṣṭhira
Mādrī's twin sons !

no. #

Behind them :
Andhakas
Vṛṣṇis
led by Pradyumna

10 And other chiefs
with upraised arms !
Conch
Cakra

शङ्खचक्रगदाशक्तिशार्ङ्ग-
लाङ्गलनन्दकाः

भगवन् मम नेत्राणाम्
अन्तर्धानं वृणे पुनः।
भवन्तं द्रष्टुमिच्छामि
नान्यं द्रष्टुमिहोत्सहे॥ #

दुरासन् महारौद्राः
सधूमाः
earful flames!

त्वमेव पुण्डरीकाक्ष
सर्वस्य जगतो हितः।
तस्मात् त्वं यादवश्रेष्ठ
प्रसादं कर्तुमर्हसि॥ त्मानम्

14 The rājās
bewildered
closed their eyes —
all except
Droṇa
Bhīṣma
maha-minded ~~wise~~ Vidura महामतिं
maha-fortune-favoured
15 And Saṃjaya.
Because they were rich in tapasyā तपोधनान्
they received celestial vision
Bhagavān Janārdana from ~~Krishna.~~ प्रादात् तेषां स भगवान्
16 Mādhava- Krishna's magnificent form दिव्यं चक्षुर्जनार्दनः
filled the sabhā !
dundubhi- Divine drums sounded,
flowers fell. देवदुन्दुभयो नेदुः पुष्पवर्षं पपात च

17 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said : "Favour me, ~~O~~
O lotus-eyed one !
O incomparable Yādava, worker for the good
of the world !

18 Revered ~~Illustrious~~ one, bhagavan,
restore me my sight !
I wish to see you,
I wish to see nothing else.

19 Maha-muscled Janārdana- ~~Strong-armed~~ Krishna said ~~thus~~
to rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra : ~~"Delighter~~
"Delighter of the Kauravas, I grant sight ~~to~~
to your sightless eyes." कुरुनन्दन

20 Mahārāja, Janamejaya! Wonder of wonders ! ~~The~~
Dhṛtarāṣṭra regained
his sight to have a vision of ~~the~~ Vāsudeva-
Krishna's Universal Form.

तत्राद्भुतं महाराज
धृतराष्ट्रस्य चक्षुषी लब्धवान्

क्षमावान् निरमर्षश्च नैव स्त्री न पुनः पुमान्



34 Is the person who shows mercy
and discards anger.
Complacency and softness destroy
a man's prosperity.

संतोषो वै श्रियं हन्ति

35 Lack of effort never brings success.
Pluck out these defects,
steel your heart. Foe-crushing is the
sign of manhood.

आयसं हृदयं कृत्वा

36 And how is a woman-like man
ever a man?
A powerful hero who performs
like a lion

37 May become a victim of fate,
yet remains a hero
to his subjects; the hero who sacrifices
personal comforts

दिष्टभावं मोदते

11 JULY 2004

Professor P. Lal reads of Kunti's exhortation to Krishna to remove the martial vacillation of Yudhisthira by narrating the story of Queen Vidula ridiculing her son Sanjaya for his spinelessness in delaying to fight his enemies, in the 237th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of the Mahabharata of Vyasa at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 11 July 2004 at 11 a.m.

on others' charity?

परपिण्डोपजीविनाम्

यमाजीवन्ति पुरुषं सर्वभूतानि सञ्जय ।
पक्वं द्रुममिवासाद्य तस्य जीवितमर्थवत् ॥

*The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [V : 133 / 42 - 45]* 19

Tatal

42 My son, may Brahmins and well-wishers
depend on you,
as creatures on rain, as gods on Satakratu-
Indra of a hundred sacrifices.

depend

43 That man's life is meaningful, Sañjaya,
who is like a tree
loaded with ripe fruit, upon whom
all creatures depend.

44 Excellent is the life of the hero
whose excellence
supports his friends, as Śakra-Indra supports
the joys of the Tridaśa-gods.

45 The man who depends on the strength
of his own arms
finds fame in this life and sublime
fulfilment in the next."

⊛ शुभां गतिं

Session 237
11 July 2004
(Gita, p 2401)

SECTION 134

⊛

स्वबाहुबलमाश्रित्य यो
अभ्युज्जीवति मानवः ।
स लोके लभते कीर्तिं परत्र
च शुभां गतिं ॥

wever,

meanness

पौरुषं ज्ञातुमिच्छसि

2 What's he but a thief — the Kṣatriya
who abandons
energy and bravery, and struggles merely
to keep alive?

3 My well-intentioned words, helpful
in every way,
are like medicine to a man in
death's last throes.

वाक्यानि
गुणवन्ति

14 *[V : 139 / 8 - 15] The P. Lāl Transcreation*

8 A wicked-ātmaned man ignores good advice,
and pursues wickedness :
a good-ātmaned man ignores bad advice,
and does good deeds.

9 You harmed them, yet Pāṇḍu's sons
wish you well, O Excellent Bharata,
though you continue to harbour wickedness
against them.

10 The eldest Kauravas, I, and Vidura
and Krishna
have advised you for your welfare,
but you do not listen.

11 *I am strong!* You think that's enough
to overpower the Pāndavas —
like a man trying to swim across the shark-and-
makara-filled waters of the flooded Gangā.

12 You dress yourself up in Yudhisthira's
cast-off robes,
and think yourself rich. You bask in
the prosperity of another!

13 Yudhisthira lived in the forest with
Draupadi and his brothers,
and no king had the power and courage
to dispossess him.

14 Yudhisthira's glory is like the glory
of Ailavila-Kubera,
the god of riches; before him
even rājas are servants.

15 In fact, he obtained precious gems
from Kubera's realm,
and the Pāndavas will now attack you
for their share of the kingdom.

The 15

We have both studied, donated,
16 performed yajñas,
pleased Brahmins. Bhisma and I do not
have long to live now.

17 But you — losing happiness, kingdom,
wealth, friends —
are facing maha-calamity by fighting
the Pāṇḍavas.

18 Illustrious, truth-speaking Draupadi devi,
lady of tapasya, fierce-vowed —
how will you ever defeat Pandava Yudhisthira,
whose victory she desires?

19 His adviser is Krishna ~~his brother~~ Janardana —
Dhananjaya Arjuna,
the greatest arms-wielder. How will you
ever defeat him?

20 How will you ever defeat the ~~man~~ Pāṇḍava
who is supported
by rigid-vowed Brahmins dedicated
to severe self-discipline? धृतमन्त्रा जितेन्द्रियाः

21 Let me repeat to you the advice
that a well-wisher
should give to save a friend from
an ocean of sorrows —

22 Do not fight the Pāṇḍava heroes.
For Kaurava prosperity, make peace.
~~make peace~~ Do not despatch your sons, ministers and army
to the realm of Yama." सुतामात्यः बलः

द्रौपदी यस्य चाशास्ते विजयं सत्यवादिनी।
तपोघोरव्रता देवी कथं जेष्यसि पाण्डवम्॥

SECTION 140

1 "Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra, "Krishna
helped Karṇa
into his chariot, and left while courtiers
and servants watched.

2 What did that profound foe-slaying
hero tell him?
What pleasing words did Krishna speak
to Rādhā's son?

3 What were those words, harsh or gentle,
that Krishna spoke
in a voice as deep as a monsoon cloud's —
tell me, Sañjaya."

4 They were bitter — and mild (said Sañjaya),
loving and
full of dharma, truthful and meant
for his welfare,

5 Agreeable to the heart. Let me repeat
to you, what
the high-ātmaned Krishna
said to Karṇa.

6 "Son of Rādhā," began Krishna, "you
have honoured many
Veda-wise Brahmins, and selflessly sought
truth from them.

7 Karṇa, you know all the eternal
words of the Vedas,
you are familiar with the subtleties
of the Dharma-śāstras.

कानीनश्च सहोढश्च कन्यायां यश्च जायते।
वोढारं पितरं तस्य प्राहुः शास्त्रविदो जनाः॥

*The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [V : 140 / 8 - 14]* 17

8 The śāstras describe a Kānīna as son
of unwed ~~mother~~ virgin,
and Sahoḍha as son conceived before ~~the~~
and born after marriage —
both must treat as father the man
their mother marries.

Kinds of sons in Hinduism

9 You, Karṇa, are one such ; by dharma
you're Pāṇḍu's son ;
therefore, the Dharma-śāstras confirm ~~your~~
your right to be rājā.

पाण्डो पुत्रोऽसि धर्मतः

10 On your father's side, are Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons,

पितृपक्षे च ते पार्थाः मातृपक्षे च वृष्णयः

...o!

...rus

...ntī's son

...ive

...Abhimanyu अपराजित

...allies

...ṇis

...ers,

KĀNĪNA: Child born to an unmarried virgin: Vyāsa, Karṇa, Śibi, Aṣṭaka, Pratardana, Vasumān.

1) AURASA = Chest-born — son of lawfully wedded wife.
2) SAHODHA: Conceived, but not born, before marriage
3) PAUNARBHAVA: Son of re-married woman by her second husband
4) PARAŚARA: Son by a concubine
5) KĀNĪNA
6) KUNDA: illegitimate son of an adulterous wife
7) GUDHAJA: whose father is not named or known & who is born in secret (गूढ)

यदब्रुवमहं कृष्णा कटुकानि स्म पाण्डवान् ।
प्रियार्थं धार्तराष्ट्रस्य तेन तप्ये ह्यकर्मणा ॥

26 [V : 141 / 45 - 52] *The P. Lāl Transcreation*

45 I did speak cruelly to the Pāṇḍavas,
but only to please
Duryodhana. For that wrong, Krishna,
I am deeply sorry.

46 When you see me killed by Arjuna,
then, O Krishna,
you may perform the *puniściti*-concluding
yajña-rituals.

47 When the loudly-roaring sons of Pāṇḍu
drink Duhśāsana's blood,
consider that as the final drinking of
the ritual soma.

48 When Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Śikhandin rout
Droṇa and Bhīṣma,
the yajña initiated by Duryodhana will have
its intermission.

49 And when tremendously powerful Bhīma
kills Duryodhana,
consider the yajña initiated by Duryodhana
to have terminated.

50 When the wives of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's grandsons
huddle together,
having lost their protectors, their sons,
and their husbands,

51 And lament in the presence of Gāndhārī,
with dogs and vultures
roaming the battlefield,—that will be the
yajña's final bath.

52 O bull-brave Kṣatriya Madhusūdana-Krishna!
Stop the Kṣatriyas, ripe in
knowledge and age, into useless deaths
through peace-making.

यावत् स्थास्यन्ति गिरयः सरितश्च जनार्दन।
तावत् कीर्तिभवः शब्दः शाश्वतोऽयं भविष्यति॥

*The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [V : 141 | 53 - 57]* 27

53 O Keśava-Krishna! The maṇḍala of Kṣatriyas
will meet death with
weapons on Kurukṣetra, the holiest spot कुरुक्षेत्रे
in the three worlds. → पुण्यतमं त्रैलोक्यस्य

54 O Lotus-eyed ~~one~~ Vārṣṇeya, manipulate things
for our welfare —
let all the Kṣatriya warriors together

25 JULY 2004

Professor P. Lal reads of Karna's second refusal of Krishna's offer to reconcile him to his Pandava brothers, Vidura's prophecy to Kunti of the doom of all Ksatriyas, and Kunti's decision to plead personally to Karna to accept her as his mother, in the 239th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G. D. Birla Sabhagar on 25 July 2004 at 11 a.m.

Session 239
25 July 2004

## SECTION 142

परवीरहा

1 Keśava-Krishna, the slayer of heroic foes
(continued Sañjaya),
heard these words of Karṇa, ~~smiled,~~ laughed loudly,
and asked with a smile:

Gita, p 2420

2 "Don't you want this kingdom the way
I suggested ?
Don't you want the earth I am giving
to you ?

कर्णस्य वचनं श्रुत्वा केशवः परवीरहा।
उवाच प्रहसन् वाक्यं स्मितपूर्वमिदं यथा॥

अधर्मेण हि धर्मिष्ठं कृतं वैकार्यमीदृशम् ।
येषां तेषामयं धर्मः सानुबन्धो भविष्यति ॥



6 The wicked schemings
of Jayadratha, Karṇa, Duḥśāsana and Śakuni
are sure to lead to family break-ups,

7 When adharma schemes against dharma,
sooner or later
it suffers the consequences.

8 Who can approve
of this insult to dharma by the Kauravas ?
If Krishna's peace efforts fail,
Pāṇḍava war preparations will begin.

बलाद् Keśavaḥ

9 The wrongs of the ~~Kurus~~ Kauravas will lead
to a massacre of Kṣatriya heroes.
This thought makes me sleepless day and night."

10 Kuntī heard the well-meant words of Vidura;
and sighed deeply.
Sadness and despair overcame her.

→ निःश्वसन्ती दुःखार्ता

11 "Shame on wealth that leads
to the slaughter of relatives !
This war will sunder friends.

धिक् अर्थं — ज्ञातिवध

12 What greater sorrow can there be
than this ? —
the Pāṇḍavas, Cedis, Pāñcālas and Yādavas
fighting against the Bharatas.

13 War is monstrous.
What triumph is there in killing kinsmen ?
Better be poor and lose
than win and be rich.
Yet not to fight too is a shame.

दोषं ध्रुवं युद्धे

14 Oh, I am so confused ! It pains my heart !
Grandfather Bhīṣma, son of Śāntanu,
who is also the supreme soldier,

Pitāmaha, ācārya Droṇa

इति मे चिन्तयन्त्या वै हृदि दुःखं प्रवर्तते

1 AUGUST 2004

Professor P. Lal reads the Karna-Kunti meeting episode, paralleling it with a reading of Rabindranath's "Karna-Kunti Samvad", in the 240th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata, at G.D. Birla Sabhagar on 1 August 2004 at 11 a.m.

18 I burn when I think
of Karṇa's hatred of the Pāṇḍavas. पाण्डवान् प्रति
Today I hope
to soften his heart in their favour. प्रसाद

19 I will go to him today
and tell him the truth.
Because I pleased *bhagavan* Durvāsas,
he gave me a boon,.

20 Enabling me to summon anybody I wished
with mantras. पितृवेश्मनि
I was then living with my father,
अन्तःपुरे in the inner apartments of rājā Kuntibhoja's palace.

21 Confused, and afraid, yet curious,
wondering if the boon would really work, बलाबलं
Brahmin's wondering if the mantra was really effective, मन्त्राणां

22 Because I am a woman,
because I was then only a girl
guarded by my nurse, surrounded by other girls,
revolving the thought in my mind,

स्त्रीभावाद् बालभावाद्
स्त्रीजनवृता चिन्तयन्ति पुनः पुनः

40 *[V : 144 / 23 - 30] The P. Lāl Transcreation*

23 How to escape blame,
how to save my father from shame,
how to be favoured without doing wrong . . .

24 I remembered the Brahmin,
I respected him in my mind,
I was only a girl, unmarried,
I was curious, I was a virgin
entered me.

25 I was an unmarried girl
en I him in my womb.
will not refuse his mother now,
will not act against the welfare of his brothers."

h was the excellent thinking of Kuntī.
hurried to the Bhāgīrathī river
ut it in practice.

the banks of the Gaṅgā,
tī heard the Vedas chanted by her son,
an of compassion and truth.

stood behind him, patiently.
He raised his arms and stood still,
facing the east.
She waited for his meditation to end.

29 The Vṛṣṇi lady, the Kaurava wife
waited ;
she wilted in the sun's heat like
a faded lotus garland.
She sheltered in the shade of Karṇa's dress.

30 Disciplined Karṇa meditated till the sun rays
had heated his back.
He turned.
He saw Kuntī.
He joined his palms in *añjali*.

31 He observed the custom.

mahā-1 The proud and powerful son of Vikartana,
finest of men of dharma, also known as Vṛṣa,
smiled, praṇāma-ed Kuntī, and said:

उत्स्मयन्

*SECTION 145*

UNMARRIED GIRLS

1. NAGNIKĀ (nude) - below 5
2. VĀSŪ (clothed) - 5 years
3. GAURĪ (white) - 6 "
4. VATSĀ (calf) - 7 "
5. KANYĀ (shining) - 8 " (virgin) idhā's.
6. LAGNIKĀ (clinging) - 9 "

(desirable to marry a girl between NAGNIKĀ + LAGNIKĀ) eived you.

7. BĀLIKĀ (with downy hair) - 10 " vomb.
8. RAJASVALĀ (red-appearing) - 11 " a,
9. ROHIṆĪ (red) - 12 " palace.
10. KUMARĪ (girl) : 13 "
11. YUVATĪ (juvenile) : 14 " ght makes all things visible
12. DUHITṚ (daughter) (one who can milk cows) : 15 "
13. YOṢAṆĀ (young) : 16 " palace .coat of mail,
14. KIŚORĪ (foal) adolescent 17 "
15. TARUṆĪ (forested) : 18 "
16. PRAUḌHA (mature) : 19 " your brothers are,

... my son.

7 According to dharma,
the finest fruit of dharma is to earn
the approval of one's father and mother
by pleasing them.

8 The majesty of Yudhiṣṭhira,
which Arjuna protected once,
has been usurped by Duryodhana.
Recover it from his selfish hands,
and be yourself majestic.

9 Let all the Kauravas today see
Karṇa and Arjuna, brother and brother,
reconciled.
Make the wicked bow down !

10 If, like Balarāma and Krishna,
Karṇa and Arjuna become one,
what is there in the world
that they will not be able to do ?

11 Surrounded by your five brothers,
Karṇa, shine ! —
Like Brahmā on a dais at a great sacrifice,
surrounded by the gods.

12 You have all the talents,
you are the eldest of my sons.
Don't say you are a Sūta's son.
You are the valiant son of Kunti."

## SECTION 146

Vaiśampāyana continued :
Karṇa heard a loving voice
issue from the distant disc of the sun,
Sūrya speaking out of paternal affection :

2 *Kuntī speaks the truth.*
*Follow your mother's advice, Karṇa.*
*Great good will come if you do so.*

3 But neither the words of his mother
nor the voice of his father
swayed firm-in-truth Karṇa from his resolve.

4 "Kṣatriya lady," Karṇa said,
agree with you
what you say is the door to dharma.

ou treated me was wrong, maha-objectionable.
it,
my dignity suffered.

atriya,
ived of Kṣatriya rites,
u treated me as you did.
y could have done worse ?

eded help,
ed no compassion.
ed me of my saṃskāras.
eed me,
me to me.

8 You never cared for me as a mother.
Now you come to me,
only because you need me.

9 Who does not fear
the alliance of Arjuna and Krishna ?
If I defect to the Pāṇḍavas,
will they not say I did so out of fear ?

10 Till now, I had no brother.
If, on the eve of battle, I join the Pāṇḍavas,
what will the Kṣatriyas say ?

śraddhā
श्रद्धे

सत्क्रिया = to show respect, to pay th[e]
सत्क्रिया - any puri[fying rite] (incl. funeral ceremony)
Saṃskāra: sacred ceremony, one which purifies from the taint of sin in the womb, and regeneration —
MANU: 12 rites
GAUTAMA: 40 "

स क्रियां
क्रियाकाले
हीनसंस्कारम्

Dhanañjaya

अहं प्रेष्यश्च दासश्च तवाद्य सुतवत्सले



34 I did *añjali* before my mother
and said : *Mother,*
*though Śāntanu's son and Kuru-guardian,*
*I cannot*

35 *Break my vow.* I said this to her
again and again,
adding : *I made this vow chiefly*
*for your sake.*

36 *I am your slave. Command me*
I said all this to my mother
and the subjects,

37 I pleaded with the Vyāsa,
as did mother
maharāja, urging to sleep with
my brother's wives

38 And have children by them. Maharāja,
he agreed,
and were born,

प्रसादं कृतवान्

39 Because he was blind, your father
could not be rājā,
so world-renowned mahātmā Pāṇḍu
became the rājā.

40 Because he was rājā, his sons
are entitled
be reasonable, give them
half the kingdom.

41 So long as I am alive, who but I
is fit to rule ?
Do not laugh at my words — we all
desire peace.

अन्धः करणहीनत्वान्न वै राजा पिता तव।
राजा तु पाण्डुरभवन्महात्मा लोकविश्रुतः॥

श्रोतव्यं खलु वृद्धानां नाभिशङ्केर्वचो मम।
नाशयिष्यसि मा सर्वमात्मानं पृथिवीं तथा॥



42 I do not make any distinction between
you and them.
Your father, Gāndhārī and Vidura hold
the same opinion.

43 Listen to the words of the elderly.
Do not reject, you will
what I say, or you'll destroy yourself
and the world."

## SECTION 148

1 May fortune favour you (continued Vāsudeva-Krishna),
After Bhīṣma, eloquent Droṇa
said the following words to Duryodhana
in the assembly :

2 "Pratīpa's son Śāntanu always wished
the welfare of his race;
देवव्रत divine-vowed Bhīṣma always wished Devavrata
the welfare of his race.

3 So did truth-loving, self-controlled Pāṇḍu, सत्यसंधः
ruler of men — जितेन्द्रियः
a dharmātmā rājā of good vows सुव्रतः
and good intentions. सुसमाहितः

4 Enhancer of dynasty-glory Pāṇḍu
gave the kingdom to wise
ददात् Dhṛtarāṣṭra and to his younger
Ksattā brother, Vidura.

5 Establishing never-wavering Dhṛtarāṣṭra
on the throne, O rājā,
Kaurava-Pāṇḍu retired to the forest with
his two wives.

13 The man who trained under Bharadvāja,
who is invincible,
dedicated to truth, who challenges ~~both~~ mahā-powerful
Droṇa and Bhīṣma,

14 The envy of all the world's rulers, श्लाघ्यः
the finest of generals,
surrounded by sons and grandsons like पार्थिववंशस्य
शतशाखा इव द्रुमः a hundred-branched tree,

15 The lord of the earth whose fierce tapasyā तपो घोरं सदारः
with his wife
was directed at Droṇa's death, the hero
of our assembly,

16 The excellent ruler of the earth who
acts like a father,
श्वशुरो द्रुपदोऽस्माकं is our father-in-law Drupada. He should
be our general.

17 He will face ~~both~~ Droṇa and Bhīṣma
without flinching ; this rājā can
~~he can~~ handle divine weapons, ~~and was~~ he was once
loved-and-loving sakhā- Droṇa's friend."

18 Mādrī's twin sons gave their opinions, वासविर्वासवसमः
after which
Indra's son, Vāsavi- ambidexterous Arjuna, Indra's equal, सव्यसाची
said these words :

19 "The divine being who, by tapasyā
and ṛṣi-gratification,
sprang mahā-armed, and had ~~the~~ महाभुजः
the dazzle of fire,

20 Dressed in armour, equipped with bows
and swords,
in a divine-horsed chariot out of
a mahā sacred fire ritual,

राजा सखा अङ्गिरसो नृपः (Acc. to Nilakantha, this is Drona Bharadvaja)

21 The valiant warrior whose chariot
roars like mahā-clouds,
the hero who is lion-muscled,
who is lion-brave,

22 That radiant one who has the heart
of a lion,
who is lion-shouldered, who soars
like a lion,

23 That handsome-eyed man who has
sparkling teeth,
cheeks, arms, face, thighs, feet,
and physique,

24 Whom no weapon can harm, who is
a rutting elephant —
that self-restrained truth-speaker, was born
to kill Droṇa.

25 Only Dhṛṣṭadyumna can face the arrows
of Bhīṣma,
which rush like thunderbolts, and sting
like fiery serpents,

26 Which have the terror of messengers
come from Yama,
whose fiery thunderbolt-impact only
Paraśurāma survives.

27 I cannot see anyone, O rājā,
who can withstand
the mahā-vowed Bhīṣma except Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
This is my opinion.

28 He should command us, for he is
swift and skilful,
elephant-strong, and dressed in
impenetrable armour."

14 [V : 154 / 9 - 15] The P. Lāl Transcreation

and Vidura, even to me — he turns
us all down.

9 He does not care for dharma, nor
for fame ; indeed,
protected by Karṇa, that ill-ātmaned man
thinks all is won.

10 Duryodhana went so far as
my arrest,
but that ill-ātmaned rascal failed
in his attempt.

11 Neither Bhīsma nor Droṇa objected ;
with the sole
exception of Vidura
with Duryodhana.

12 Subala's son Śakuni, and Karṇa
and Duḥśāsana —
these fools made fun of you in front
of Duryodhana.

13 What's the point of repeating what
Duryodhana said ?
The fact is, he is ill-ātmaned and
he hates you.

14 All the earth-lords comprising your army
together do not have
the hate and lack of goodness that
Duryodhana possesses.

15 We do not want peace with the Kauravas
by sacrificing
our interests. It is inevitable —
war

16 Hearing the words of Krishna,
all the gathered rājās
(continued Vaiśampāyana) looked silently
at Yudhiṣṭhira's face.

17 Yudhiṣṭhira read their minds, and ordered
Bhīma, Arjuna
and the twins to plan the formation
of battle ranks.

18 The order created a noisy flurry
among the soldiers,
but cheerfully the Pāṇḍava army
obeyed instructions.

19 Realising that a massacre was looming,
dharmarājā Yudhisthira
sighed again and again, and said to
Bhīma and Arjuna:

20 "I accepted exile to avoid war;
I suffered;
and now the calamity stares us
in the face.

21 What we struggled for, eludes us,
as if we wanted
it to escape. Mahā Kali-yuga
is upon us.

22 How do we fight an enemy
who should not be killed,
how do we expect to win by killing
gurus and elders?"

23 Foe-punishing, ambidexterous Arjuna heard
dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
and repeated what Vāsudeva had said
to them earlier.

तास्मिन् यत्नो कृतोऽस्माभिः स नो हीनः प्रयत्नतः।
अकृते तु प्रयत्नेऽस्मान् उपावृत्तः कलिर्महान्॥

धर्मविद्वेषणस्य अधर्मस्यातिवादस्य

44 (V : 163 / 18 - 25) The P. Lāl Transcreation

18 Violence, and bitter malice, and contempt
for dharma,
practice of adharma, vindictiveness, acting against
elders' advice,

19 Prejudiced views, and a host of other
vicious defects —
you will face tomorrow all the bitter fruits,
O Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

20 Scoundrel! I have Vāsudeva-Krishna on my side,
I am roused
to anger. What chance have you to live

नराधम

drakṣyasi tvaṁ phalaṁ tīvram acireṇa

द्रक्ष्यसि त्वं फलं तीव्रमचिरेण
सुयोधन

Droṇa and
fe, your sons' lives.

22 When Bhīma confronts you, Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
when your sons are dead,
your brothers are dead — then you will
repent your misdeeds.'

23 That is all, gambler's son. Tell him
I have no other
promise to make. This is the truth.
It will be so."

सत्यं ब्रवीम्यहं

24 Yudhiṣṭhira added the following message
for the gambler's son :
"Ulūka, remember to give this message
to Suyodhana-Duryodhana :

25 'Don't judge my behaviour by the way
you behave.
The difference between us is the difference
between truth and falsehood.

नृत अनृत

स्वेन वृत्तेन मे वृत्तं नाधिगन्तुं त्वमर्हसि

न चाहं कामये पापमपि कीटपिपीलयोः ।
किं पुनर्ज्ञातिषु वधं कामयेयं कथंचन ॥

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26 I do not wish to harm even ants
and insects —
why should I desire the massacre
of my relatives?

Tāta! Dear one!

27 That is why we five brothers asked for
just five villages.
You utter fool, why can't you see your
coming doom?

mahā-

28 Kāma and folly have swamped your ātman,
so you boast;
and you refuse to listen to Krishna's Keśava
reasonable words.

29 What's the use of talking now? Fight!'
Gambler's son, Kaitavya,
say this to Duryodhana, who is committed
to harming me.

सुदुर्बुद्ध

30 'We have understood your meaning. Let it be
as you wish.' "

Then Bhīma said these words to Ulūka, the son of a King: → नृपात्मज

31 "Ulūka, tell that ill-minded, scheming,
wretched man, → दुर्मतिं पापपुरुषं
that wrong-doing, mean-thinking rascal
called Duryodhana — Suyodhana

शठं नैकृतिकं पापं दुराचारं सुयोधनम्

32 'Either stay in the elephant-city called
Hastinā, or be food
for a vulture's stomach. The vow I
made in the sabhā —

33 I will fulfil it — I swear by truth
I will fulfil it!
I will kill Duhśāsana, and drink his blood
on the battlefield.

सत्यं सत्येनैव शपामि ते

रुधिरं पास्याम्यहं मृधे

21 You are expert drivers of elephants and
chariots; you
have learnt arrow-craft from Droṇa
and Kṛpa.

22 The Pāṇḍavas have wronged Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
on the battlefield,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons will kill the allegedly
invincible Pāṇḍavas.

23 And I, as commander,
first the Pāṇḍavas, and then kill all
your enemies.

24 It is not right that I should praise
my own talents —
you know them anyway. Kṛtavarman is
a super-chariot-hero.

25 He alone can win the war for you,
for he is invincible;
he grips well, and shoots straight
over long distances.

26 He will smite the army as Indra smites
the Dānavas.
The archer Śalya, rājā of Madra, is a
super-chariot-hero,

27 Who boasts that he is Krishna's equal
in any battle.
He has joined you, deserting his sister's sons
Nakula and Sahadeva.

28 His arrows like ocean-waves will flood
the enemies' ranks.
The arms-expert Bhūriśravas has also
joined your side.

Bhūriśravas was struck down by Sātyaki, and his left arm was sliced by Arjuna on the Kurukṣetra battlefield.



29 As Somadatta's son, he heads the ranks
of chariot-heroes ;
...ns of

एते हनिष्यन्ति रणे (X)
पाञ्चालान् युद्धदुर्मदान् ।
कृतकिल्बिषाः पाण्डवेयैः
धार्तराष्ट्रा मनस्विनः ॥

...drathe
...equals
... leading part
...ndavas when he
...et, O rājā,

Gita Press ed. whitewashes the Pāṇḍavas and Pāñcālas!

...he severest
...concerning
...will recall
...e risk

धृतराष्ट्र के सभी मनस्वी पुत्र पाण्डवों के साथ वैर बांधे हुए हैं; अतः युद्ध मे उन्मत्त होकर लड़नेवाले पाञ्चाल योद्धाओं को वे समरभूमि मे मार डालेंगे।

सुदुर्लभो वरो लब्धः

66

...Kāmboja,"
...e will fight
for your goals.

Kābul — Killed by Arjuna, along with his younger brother

2 O excellent rājā, the war-brilliance of this chariot-hero
will be seen by the Kauravas to equal
Indra's prowess.

He is not the Sudakṣiṇa whose father was decapitated by Krishna, and who also was reduced to ashes by Krishna's cakra in Kāśi.

14 [V : 175 | 1 - 6] The P. Lāl Transcreation

10 Be gentle with me, strong-armed one,
supporters of dharma !
I have heard that you are a
of absolute truth.' "

## SECTION 175

1 "I placed the matter," Bhīṣma continued,
"before my mother,
Kālī, also called Gandhavatī, advisers,
and purohitas,

2 And I permitted the eldest girl Ambā
to return.
With my permission, she went to the Śālva
king's capital.

3 She was escorted by elderly Brahmins
and maid servants.
It was a long journey. They reached
the palace.

4 She went up to king Śālva and said :
one,
I have come to be one with you,
lord.

5 I love you, rājā, and I am yours
heart and soul.
Take me, as dharma dictates, and treat
me with dharma,
I have thoughts only of you, and you
secretly gave me word.'

6

त्वया अन्य न अहं भार्यार्थी

*The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa [V : 175 / 7 - 13]* 15

वरवर्णिनि 'Fair-skinned one, you are now another's.
I don't want you.

भद्रे 7 Good lady, go back to Bhīṣma, who
took you by force.
I do not want for wife a woman
taken by force.

8 When Bhīṣma snatched you from the
presence of the kings
and routed them, you did not mind.
You were happy. प्रीतिमती

9 Lovely lady, I do not want a wife
betrothed to another.
How can a rājā in his senses accept
such a girl? परेष्टां

10 I am a king who must set an example
of dharma for others. धर्मानादिशन्
Why do you waste my time, sweet one?
Go elsewhere.' यथेष्टं गम्यतां

11 O rājā! Pierced with the arrows of the bodiless god
of love Ananga, Ambā said:
'Earth-lord, do not say that. What you say,
was never so. → नैवं वद महीपाल नैतदेवं कथंचन

नास्मि प्रीतिमती 12 I was not happy to be abducted
by Bhīṣma!
He routed the earth-lords, and dragged me
away, weeping.

13 O Lord of the Śālvas, I am innocent.
Accept me!
No dharma ever says that a bhakta
should be turned away.

भक्तानां हि परित्यागो न धर्मेषु प्रशस्यते

36 I will kill you and your followers."
He kept saying
these words again and again, his eyes
still expanded.

37 I kept on using sweet words again
and again
to understand
failed to calm him.

38 So I bowed my head and did *praṇāma*
and I said
to that supreme Brahmin : "Why do you
want to fight me ?

39 When I was young, you instructed me
in the four weapons —
the hand-hurled, the not-hand-hurled, the
sometimes-hurled-
sometimes-not, the machine-hurled.
your pupil."

40 His eyes still flaming with anger,
Paraśurāma said :
I am your guru, and yet you refuse
to accept her !

41 You refuse to please me by not accepting
the
No other way
me.

42 Take back this girl, one,
and perpetuate
your race. You abducted her, so she cannot
find a husband."

43 I said to Paraśurāma, the destroyer
of hostile cities :

"It cannot be. What is the use, mahā-ṛṣi,
of pointless trying ?

44 Because you were my guru in the past,
Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma,
I make this special effort now. You know
that I have refused her.

45 What man will live with a woman
who loves another ?
She's like a poisonous snake in the house —
a fearful risk.

को जातु परभावां हि नारीं व्यालीमिव स्थिताम्

46 O mahā-strict-vowed Paraśurāma, I will not

गुरोरपि अवलिप्तस्य
कार्याकार्यमजानतः।
उत्पथप्रतिपन्नस्य
कार्यं भवति शासनम् ॥
(Crit. Ed. 278: 24)

* ept this

s a śloka विशुद्धात्मन्

than

परित्यागो विधीयते
(Gita Press edition)

* परित्यागो विधीयते
(he must be rejected)
(Gita Press)

red.

ru,

॥ मया

uru,

"A guru's order must be followed, even if he is arrogant, or ignorant of what is right and wrong, or straying from the right path."

).

steeped

मेव

Gita Press: he must be rejected
Satvalekar: he must be punished
(शासनम्)

21 They overcast my four horses and chariot,
O lord of the world,
but I was protected by my coat of armour,
and I kept calm. स्थित:

22 I namāskara-ed the gods and Brahmins
who had gathered;
they stood there, ~~watching~~ witnessing the combat ;
and I said, smiling :

23 "You have mocked me, but I have honoured you
as an ācārya. आचार्यता
Brahmin, listen to what you should do मानिता मे
if you seek dharma.

24 I am not at war with the Vedas
in your body,
mahā-; nor with your dignity as a Brahmin,
nor with your tapasyā.

प्रहरे क्षत्रधर्मस्य यं रामं त्वं समाश्रित: ·iya-dharma. *
ब्राह्मण: क्षत्रियत्वं हि याति * militant Brahmin
शस्त्रसमुद्यमात् ॥ ·ow, O hero,
look at the power
of my arms ; I will sever your bow
with an arrow."

27 I shot a broad-headed bhalla- arrow at him.
O bull-brave Bharata!
It sliced the top part of his bow ;
it fell on the ground.

28 Almost immediately, I let loose ~~a hundred~~
straight arrows
at the son of Jamadagni — ~~all of them~~
Kanka- vulture-winged.

कङ्कपत्राणि

29 They grazed his body like serpents :
whizzed through
the air at great speed, spitting blood
as they went.

30 His body and bloodied all over,
heroic Paraśurāma,
stood there, like the Meru mountain cascading
liquid .

31 Like the aśoka tree, at close of winter,
bursting into red blossom,
like the *kiṃśuka* tree when it is draped
in brilliant flowers.

32 Furious Paraśurāma strung another bow
and discharged
golden-winged arrows of incredible sharpness
at me.

33 Those arrows rushed at me like flaming,
poisonous snakes ;
their impact stunned me, as if my life
was being pierced.

34 But I, equally furious, shot more arrows
at Paraśurāma —
one hundred of them — after recollecting
my senses.

35 Struck by these arrows, which blazed like
fire or the sun
and stung like snakes, Paraśurāma
lost consciousness.

36 I felt sorry for him and I stopped,
Shame on war ! And shame on the dharma
of Kṣatriyas !"

37 Swarming with horrible alligators, filling
all with fear."
O rājā, saying this to the princess
of Kāśi,

38 My mother, the greatly auspicious lady,
pretended to smile,
and dismissed her. That lovely lady
refrained from
drinking water sometimes for eight months,
sometimes for ten.

39 And so the king of Kāśi's daughter,
eagerly searching
for *tīrthas*, came to Vatsa-land, tripped,
and flowed down,

40 As a river. It is reported that the
Vatsa-land river
was zig-zag, inaccessible, full of crocodiles,
and monsoon-filled.

41 Rājā, that is how, with half her body,
she became a river
through her tapasyā, and with the other half
remained a girl.

## SECTION 188

1 The holy men (continued Bhīṣma), seeing her
intent on tapasyā,
tried to dissuade her, saying, "What do
you aim to do?"

2 The girl replied to the ṛṣis heavy
with tapasyā :
"Bhīṣma ruined me, made me worthless
for husband-dharma.

पतिलोकाद् विहीना च नैव स्त्री न पुमानिह

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3 ~~O tapasyā-rich ones, I want nothing in~~ तपोधना:
in worldly profit.
I ~~will destroy him.~~ Till then, no peace
for me at all.

4 He has made my life one ~~long~~ everlasting misery, शाश्वतीम्
~~prevented me from~~ दुःखे
~~being husbanded~~, made me in this world
neither man or woman —

5 So until ~~I kill Gaṅgā's son, I will~~
~~not rest, O tapasyā-~~
~~rich ones!~~ What I say to you, is what I feel एष मे

स्त्रीभावे परिनिर्विण्णा पुंस्त्वार्थे (* I want हृदि संकल्पो
भीष्मे प्रतिचि- कृतनिश्चया । No one
कीर्षामि नास्मि वीर्यैति वै पुनः ॥

7 In the midst of all the mahā-ṛṣis, शूलपाणिरुमापति
the husband of Umā,
~~the trident-wielding Śiva,~~ appeared दर्शयामास
before Ambā.

8 He asked her what boon she wanted. स्वेन रूपेण
She wanted me defeated.
The god said to the strong-willed girl;
"You will defeat him." मनस्विनीम्

9 She asked Śiva : "I am a woman.
How can it be, O divine one,
~~that I, on the battlefield,~~ will defeat देव
powerful Bhīṣma ?

10 O Lord of Umā, ~~because~~ I am a woman, ~~therefore~~
~~I am frail~~ I am frail-minded.
But you have promised me victory over Bhīṣma,
~~over Bhīṣma.~~ O lord of ~~ghost~~ spirits Bhūteśa!

स्त्रीभावेन च मे गाढं मनः शान्तमुमापते ।

प्रतिश्रुतश्च भूतेश त्वया भीष्मपराजयः ॥

## *SECTION 192*

1 O strong-armed king (continued Bhīṣma),
Śikhaṇḍin's mother
gave her husband the true facts about her
daughter Śikhaṇḍinī.

2 "I was childless, O rājā, and so, fearing
the taunts of
my co-wives, I gave out that Śikhaṇḍinī
was a son.

3 You loved me, and you approved it.
O finest of men,
the rituals of a son were performed
for this daughter.

4 I agreed to it, and you decided
to get a wife
for her. I recalled the words of Śiva,
'Born female,
she will be male.' So we anticipated
no problems."

5 Hearing this, Drupada
informed all his courtiers,
and summoned a meeting.
He did this, O rājā,
in order to see
to his subjects' protection.

6 Though he was involved
in deceiving Dāśārṇa,
he made up his plans
with deep concentration,
to see that relations
would remain amicable.

7 Though it was naturally well-defended,
he further fortified
his capital against any attack,
O Bharata Indra-among-rājās.

8 But the continuing friction with the Dāśārna king,
O bull-brave Bharata,
was a source of anxiety to rājā Drupada

9 How do I get rid of this threat of war
between in-law relatives? —
This worry made him pay reverence
to the gods.

10 Seeing her husband paying reverence
to the gods
in this fashion, his wife, the devī,
said to him :

11 "In prosperous times, homage to the gods
is recommended
by good men. In adversity, even more so.
Honour your gurus and elders.

12 Offer pūjā to the gods with generous
*dakṣiṇā* to Brahmins.
Let sacred fires be lit to pacify
the Dāśārṇa king.

13 My lord, plan out a way of reconciliation
without any war.
All this is possible, through the grace
of the gods.

देवतानां प्रसादेन सर्वमेतद् भविष्यति

14 O large-eyed king, steps to defend
the city have
already been implemented, as advised by
your ministers.

पृथुलोचन

31 That great earth-lord joyfully presented
wealth, elephants,
horses, cattle, and ~~innumerable slaves~~
to Śikhaṇḍin.

32 After accepting pūjā and scolding ~~[illegible]~~
his daughter, he left.
With the departure of the reconciled,
golden-armoured
~~King, Śikhaṇḍin also was happy~~
~~[illegible]~~
Śikhaṇḍin felt relieved.

33 It so happened that some time later,
Kubera, borne
on human shoulders, happened to visit
Sthūṇākarṇa's ~~place~~ abode.

34 Roaming in the mansion,
the guardian of wealth
immediately noticed
a profusion of garlands,
delightfully varied,
in the yakṣa's ~~[illegible]~~ dwelling.

35 And roots aromatic
with the sweetest incense,
and colourful flags,
and abundance of food
and plentiful drinks
and similar luxuries.

36 Seeing all the magnificent decorations,
seeing everywhere
garlands studded with gems and gold
and diamonds;

28 NOVEMBER 2004

Professor P. Lal reads of the sex-change from girl to boy of Sikhandin performed by the yaksa Sthunakarna, and the yaksa-lord Kubera's curse on Sthunakarna for this misdeed, and Bhisma's detailed account of the war preparations by Duryodhana and Yudhisthira on Kuruksetra, in the 254 th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G.D. Birla Sabhagar on 28 November 2004 at 11 a.m.

I think he does." महाद्रुप

40 The yakṣas replied: "Rājā, Drupada had a daughter Śikhaṇḍinī. Sthūṇākarṇa for some reason, has exchanged his manhood for her womanhood.

41 So he stays inside the mansion, because he is now female.
The reason he hasn't come to greet you is he feels ashamed. सव्रीड

42 That is the only explanation for his not greeting you, O rājā.
Now you know. Do what is proper. Leave your chariot here."

43 The lord of the yakṣas said again and again:
"Summon Sthūnakarṇa here! I will punish him."

44 O Lord of the earth, he was brought before the Indra of yakṣas,
and, because he was a girl, mahārājā,
he stood there, shamefaced.

व्रीडासमन्वित:




## A CHECKLIST OF HIS BOOKS

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Lessons (2nd revised and enlarged ed. 2002)
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An Annotated Mahabharata Bibliography
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# श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता

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छान्दोग्योपनिषद्

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# WRITERS WORKSHOP ~ A Credo by P. Lal

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How then has WW survived? Without plush foundations to back it, without advertisement, without large-hearted patrons? Initially, by the skin of our teeth (1958-1964). Then (1965-1990) by my visits to hard currency lands, specially Great Britain, the USA and Australia on lecture assignments and visiting professorships on two dozen or so occasions, and pumping the shekels thus earned to keep alive a gasping ideal.

Alternative publishing is desperately needed wherever commercial publication rules. WW is *not* a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known and well known, and then leaves them in the loving clutches of the so-called "free" market (which can be and is very cut-throat and very expensive). It is not sad, it is obnoxious, to plead, as publishers do, "I will not publish poetry because it does not sell." Most English book publishing today in boom-time India and outside is book-dumping. There is a nexus between high-profile PR-conscious book publishers, semi-literate booksellers, moribund public and state libraries, poorly informed and nepotistic underlings in charge of book review pages and supplements of most national newspapers and magazines, and biased bulk purchases of near worthless books by bureaucratic institutions set up–believe it or not!–to inform, educate and elevate the reading public.

Because WW goes in for serious creative writing, and because there is no satisfactory distribution network for such writing, its terms of publication are unique. I must be the only publisher in the world who knows when and where every book is sold; I have the name and address of every buyer of a WW book. Upon my acceptance of a typescript, an agreement form is sent to the writer. *All* copyright remains with the writer. Poetry appears in 350 copies; prose in 500. Ten per cent (35 copies of the poetry book, 50 of the prose) is given in lieu of royalty. The writer is also expected to make an advance purchase of 100 copies of his or her book, for sale or distribution as he or she pleases. Printing is done in Calcutta hand-operated presses, situated in the residences of their owners. The whole process is a cottage industry style low-key entrepreneurship, in the belief that small is not only beautiful but viable as well. Vanity and sponsored publishing? Yes, I am humanly vain about it and I do sponsor what I think is good writing. If any lover of literature will offer to subsidise, with no strings attached, striking new work by talented Indian poets, fiction-writers and belles-lettrists, please get in touch with me. The gesture will be acknowledged, appreciated, accepted, and implemented. Such Good Samaritan generosities, not market forces, are at the root of civilised and significant publishing the world over.

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